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The Seminary Experience:

Conceptual Worlds of First-Career and Second-Career Seminarians

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The Seminary Experience:

Conceptual Worlds of First-Career and Second-Career Seminarians

by

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To Laura.

I do not think that word means what you think it means.

The Princess Bride, 1987

screenplay by William Goldman; directed by Rob Reiner

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The Seminary Experience:

Conceptual Worlds of First-Career and Second-Career Seminarians

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2009

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This study explored the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career seminarians enrolled in the M.Div. program at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS), a mainline Protestant school. Research questions were: 1) What themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience? 2) How do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)? 3) How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare? 4) Do first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?

Using interactive qualitative analysis, the researcher discovered 12 key themes common to the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students. For both types of students, school bureaucracy and church requirements were drivers that influenced many aspects of the seminary experience. The outcomes of the seminary experience were

transformation in knowledge, pastoral skills, and sense of vocation. Students became satisficers to meet the competing demands of school, church, and family. Students reported that theological education required vigorous engagement and self-discipline. Students affirmed that God was active in their life worlds. The life worlds of younger and older participants were similar in terms of themes and in the way that these themes combined into mindmaps, although second-career students were more frustrated than first-career students about the way that seminary shrank life outside of school.

First-career students reported that the seminary's over-arching message was about community. Second-career students concluded that the over-arching message was about training for ministry. Ecological theory suggests that students received the over-arching messages that they did because of how they had been shaped by involvement in various social microsystems.

Two distinctive findings of the study were the importance that participants placed on fulfilling church requirements for ordination and the role that campus facilities played in assisting or hindering their theological studies. Based on the study's results and previous literature about seminary students, the researcher proposed a model to describe student experience in seminary.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Before the 1970s, the vast majority of students studying for the Christian ministry in North America were young, white men. Larsen and Shopshire (1988) estimated that the mean age of a seminary student in 1962 was 25.4 years and in 1975 was 26.0 years. Since then, women and older men have begun seminary training in large numbers. The average age of entering seminarians increased throughout the rest of the Twentieth Century. By 1986, the mean age had risen to 31.1 years (Larsen & Shopshire, 1988) and rose to 32.1 years in 1991 (Larsen, 1995). In the fall of 2006, 39 percent of students enrolled in Master of Divinity (M.Div.) programs were age 30 or under, 26 percent were between 30 and 39, 21 percent were 40 to 49, and 13 percent were age 50 or older (Association of Theological Schools, 2006). The advent of older seminarians was part of a broader societal change in how Americans pursued life, work, and career. The study reported here compares the seminary experience of first-career (younger) and second-career (older) seminarians.

This chapter, first of all, sketches the background for the increase in the number of second-career students who pursue theological education. Second, the chapter states the problem underlying the study. Third, the chapter articulates the purpose and research questions for a qualitative study comparing the seminary experiences of first-career and second-career theological students. After outlining the significance of the research reported here for five groups of stakeholders, ranging from theological educators to those who study life-course development and the concept of career, the chapter summarizes the literature pertinent to the research reported here. Next, the chapter states the assumptions

of interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the methodology that the study employed. Seventh, the chapter defines important, recurring terms. Finally, the chapter presents the organization of the study.

Background

From Lifetime Jobs to Boundaryless Careers

This section situates changes in seminary enrollment within larger changes in American society in the past 30 years. The standard script for work life in the United States for the generation following the Second World War followed a stylized plot. A young person explored the range of options available, weighed his or her native abilities and aptitudes, then selected a career. In the working-class version of the script, the choice led to steady work in a factory or trade. In the middle-class version, the path led to college and then a profession, perhaps pursued with the same company until retirement. Hall (1982) called these lifetime jobs and estimated that approximately 40 percent of workers aged 30 or older would hold the same job for 20 years or more. By the 1970s, however, researchers noticed that this script was followed by fewer and fewer individuals. Bolles (1972) provided practical job-hunting advice for what he called career-changers. According to Bolles, a lifetime of work for most persons would not be a progression up the ladder to greater levels of responsibility in a single firm, but rather a series of careers. "Every man (and woman) is going to have to learn how to go about identifying a viable second career for himself and herself. And maybe even a third" (p. 61). Bolles defined a new career as beginning work "in a new field for which . . . [one's] previous experience would not seem to qualify him or her" (preface).

Although no consensus exists about the precise definition of career or career change (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008; Collin & Young, 2000) it appears that changing jobs and changing careers in Bolles' (1972) sense has become even more common than it was a generation ago. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) and Friedman (2006) argued that globalization and free-market competition have broken the traditional script for career advancement entirely. Responsibility for a career has shifted from firms to individuals, making the notion and pursuit of careers essentially boundaryless. Analysts (Galston, 2007; Wuthnow, 2007) report that the current cohort of Americans in their 20s are delaying marriage and child-rearing. Those in their 20s have no expectation of the kind of career path described in Whyte's (1956) classic study of advancement within a single organization. In a 1999 national survey, 48 percent of respondents aged 21 to 29 reported that they expected to be engaged in three or more lines of work during their lives (Wuthnow, 2007, p. 31).

Brooks (2007) suggests that the four-stage pattern of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age has functionally been replaced by a six-stage scheme of childhood, adolescence, odyssey, adulthood, active retirement, and old age. *Odyssey* may be a full decade of wondering and experimentation between various jobs, relationships, and education as young adults navigate the fluid structures of the Twenty-First Century global economy. Arnett (2000, 2004) describes the period between ages 18 and 30 in "industrialized or 'postindustrial' countries" (2004, p. 21) as an unprecedented time of *emerging adulthood*. During these years, Arnett argues, emerging adults in industrialized societies try on jobs, relationships, and identities through repeated improvisation with little control from parents, like the characters in Coupland's (1991) novel *Generation X*.

Arnett found that the emerging adults he surveyed and interviewed defined adulthood by independence of thought and action rather than by traditional sociological markers such as "settling down" to full-time employment or marriage. Côté (2000) agrees with Arnett about the larger social mechanisms shaping identity, but is less sanguine about the ability of large numbers of young adults to achieve a mature identity.

The Rise of Second-Career Seminarians

Ministry in the Christian churches was not exempt from the impact of career-changing. Priests and ministers left the ministry in increasing numbers beginning in the 1960s, despite the fact that traditionally a vocation to ministry was assumed to be a lifetime commitment (Holifield, 2007). At the same time, individuals who had left other employment slowly began to enroll in seminaries to acquire the theological education needed to pursue ordained ministry, typically pursing the Master of Divinity degree (M.Div.), the graduate professional degree required by many denominations for those seeking to serve as pastors to congregations or chaplains in other settings.

By the 1980s, a considerable number of students who had left one career were enrolled in theological schools. University of Chicago historian Martin Marty (1985) speculated that second-career students included those who failed in other professions and who, after a religious awakening, went to seminaries to get definite answers and useful skills to put to work in professional ministry. By the mid-1980s, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) commissioned a report to study in depth "the phenomenon of older students on United States seminary campuses" (Larsen & Shopshire, 1988, p. 12). Wheeler (2001) found that older theological students were more likely to be interested in serving as pastors to congregations than younger students. However, despite the

concerted efforts of many church leaders to recruit younger students to attend seminary, the average age of men studying in North American seminaries is 33 and the average age of women is 39 (Wheeler, Miller, & Aleshire, 2007). Second-career seminarians remain the majority population in theological schools.

Problem Statement

The majority of students entering seminaries in the first decade of the Twenty-First Century in North America do so with work experience in some field. Theological educators recognize that the life experience of a single 22-year-old fresh out of college is different from the life experience of a married 35-year-old (who may also be a parent) who enrolls at the same seminary (Forsberg & Mudge, 1991). However, relatively few studies have taken seriously the breadth in ages represented in the student population of graduate theological schools. The studies focusing on second-career seminarians that have been published, as chapter two of this study documents, focus on motivation to attend seminary (Jones, 1996), learning styles (Reistroffer, 1997), and leadership practices (Hillman, 2004). Such research does little to shed light on what the seminary experience means to students themselves, whether students are in seminary during their odyssey years or are older.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study explores the seminary experience of first-career and second-career theological students in one free-standing Protestant seminary using interactive qualitative

analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Specifically, this study investigates four research questions:

1. What themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?
2. How do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?
3. How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?
4. Do first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?

Significance

Understanding the seminary experience of first- and second-career students is important for five groups of stakeholders. First, understanding the seminary experience is important to theological educators who have responsibility for teaching students. By better understanding how students experience the complex reality of theological education, these educators will be able to compare the stated intentions of their curricula with the effects on students. Second, understanding the seminary experience is important for churches and other ministry organizations that employ seminary graduates, and for church leaders who have responsibility for overseeing ministers. By better understanding the seminary experience, these leaders will know the relative strengths and weaknesses of newly minted ministers. Third, understanding the seminary experience of first- and second-career students has implications for those educating other helping professionals,

such as social workers. These professions are structurally similar to ministry in terms of educational requirements, the setting for professional work, and a tradition of altruism (Wheeler, Miller, & Aleshire, 2007).

Fourth, results of the study may inform those with research interests in the persistence and degree completion of graduate students (Lovitts, 2001). The dynamics of professional education, such as the interaction between a student's academic responsibilities and family commitments, may be similar to those found among graduate students. Fifth, the results of the study have implications for social scientists seeking to understand changes in the phases of life-course development (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; Hunt, 2005; Wuthnow, 2007), especially as those changes influence the sequencing of jobs during a working lifetime. Thus, studying those who have changed careers may shed light on the concept of career development (Gothard, Mignot, Offer, & Ruff, 2001; Yarnall, 2008).

Summary of Literature

Chapter two of this study reviews the literature pertinent to the research reported here. This section of chapter one briefly summarizes that literature in order to situate the study's purpose and research questions in the history of scholarship. The bulk of literature about North American seminary students consists of four parallel segments. These are quantitative studies, ethnographies, discussions of the intended and enacted curricula of theological schools, and questionnaire data collected by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

Quantitative Studies

Small Scale Studies

Two empirical studies compared first-career and second-career seminarians on variables of research interest. One other study focused exclusively on motivation for second-career seminarians. Reistroffer (1997) studied the relationship between learning styles and career choices of 347 students at six mainline Protestant seminaries using gender and first-career versus second-career students (in her usage, traditional versus non-traditional) as the main subgroups. She found that second-career students were more firmly committed to the career preference of pastor when compared to first-career students. Hillman (2004) studied differences in leadership practices among 330 masters-level students at Dallas Theological Seminary, using the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2000; 2002), an instrument designed to assess leadership behaviors and aptitudes in organizational settings. He found a statistically significant difference between scores of older and younger students (first- and second-career students) on the Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart sub-scales of the Leadership Practices Inventory. There were no significant differences between first-career and second-career seminarians on the Inspiring a Shared Vision sub-scale.

Jones (1996) examined the motivations of second-career seminarians regarding their decision to enter ministry. He rooted his study in psychological theories of innate motivation (Tomkins, 1995). The researcher conducted interviews with 10 second-career students attending theological schools in Ohio. Jones concluded that the need to belong and serve others, both innate mechanisms, were keys to understanding the vocational

choice of the research participants. In the large-scale studies reviewed below, researchers were also interested in examining the motivations attracting students to seminary study and ministry.

Large-Scale Studies of First- and Second-Career Seminarians

The largest sustained studies of first- and second-career seminarians (Larsen, 1995; Larsen & Shopshire, 1988) were published as special issues of *Theological Education*, the journal of ATS. Larsen and Shopshire constructed a questionnaire and distributed it to approximately 5,000 students enrolled in M.Div. or equivalent degree programs in ATS schools. The survey asked questions about what drew individuals to seminary study, the financial costs of theological study, and what students experienced during seminary. Results were aggregated by age (using the categories of under 30, 30 to 39, and 40 and over), sex, and denomination. The researchers discovered that the most common motivator for a ministerial vocation was an experience of a calling from God. Students over 30 reported that a meaningless job or a major traumatic event (such as divorce or death) motivated them to attend seminary at higher rates than students under 30. Larsen and Shopshire concluded that, despite the preconception among some that young minds are more malleable than older minds, second-career seminarians could make the adjustment to seminary life and meet the academic expectations of theological study.

In a follow-up study, Larsen (1995) distributed the same questionnaire to a new, stratified sample of seminarians in 1991. He also re-surveyed seminarians from the 1986 survey, approximately five years after their graduation. The second study sought to explore differences between first-career and second-career seminarians, as well as

examine the perceptions of practicing ministers. The 1991 respondents reported that the most common motivator towards a ministerial vocation was an experience of divine call. The second most common motivator was church influence. Students over 30 reported that a meaningless job or a major traumatic event (such as divorce or death) motivated them to attend seminary at higher rates than students under 30. These results echo the earlier study. Indeed, in most cases there was little variation between the 1986 and 1991 data.

Ethnographies

Shaping Humanistic Professionals at Midwest Seminary

Two ethnographies are relevant for researchers concerned with first-career and second-career seminarians. Kleinman (1984) conducted field work at Midwest Seminary, a Protestant theological school in the Chicago area. Implementing a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), she traced how seminary students became socialized into the role of humanistic professionals whose core activity was pastoral counseling of a "nonjudgmental, appreciative, and supportive" kind (p. 11). She interpreted their experience in the framework of deprofessionalization (Haug, 1973; Toren, 1975), the increasing loss of monopoly power over clients. According to Kleinman, students acquired an identity as ministers through shared meals, worship, and dormitory life as well as through classroom lectures and reading assignments. Nowhere in her study, however, did Kleinman write specifically about second-career seminarians.

Getting the Message at Two Seminaries

Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) conducted a meticulous dual ethnography of one mainline and one evangelical seminary. The researchers studied how seminary culture socialized or formed seminarians, growing from their reading of the

micro-cultures of congregations (Hopewell, 1987) and corporations (Ouichi & Wilkins, 1985). Like Kleinman (1984), Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler rooted their research in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researchers found that the faculty and administration of each school promoted a dominant message. At Evangelical Theological Seminary (ETS), that message was that God's plan for the world was inerrantly inscribed in the Bible, and that students should cultivate the discipline to understand God's written plan and live by it. The answers to the ethical or philosophical questions posed by Twentieth-Century life were definitely stated in scripture. At Mainline Theological Seminary (MTS), the dominant message was that the purpose of religious institutions is to transform social structures to promote justice for all persons.

The researchers discovered that students understood the dominant message at each seminary, but a distinctive student subculture stood in tension with that message. At ETS, most students valued emotionally charged worship and prayer rather than sober engagement with the written Word of God. At MTS, many students understood ministry to be a way to serve the needs of people rather than to reform social structures to make them more just. Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) concluded that at both schools the educational process centered on the encounter between students and the school's dominant message. To a great extent, they concluded, student learning in the broadest sense is a product of the existing religious commitments that students bring with them to seminary and student appropriation of parts of the seminary's dominant message. Except for one lively discussion about inclusivity at MTS, the researchers did not discuss explicit differences or similarities between first-career and second-career students.

The ethnographic accounts reviewed here attended to what researchers observed and how that behavior fit into theories such as deprofessionalization or organizational culture. Theological schools also have stated purposes and create curricula to achieve those purposes. The next section briefly reviews the literature on the intended curriculum in theological schools.

The Intended Curriculum: What Seminaries Hope To Do

Porter (2006) distinguishes between various meanings of a school's curriculum. The intended curriculum refers to explicit statements about what ought to be taught. Course descriptions in a school's catalog describe the intended curriculum. The enacted curriculum refers to the various kinds of instruction delivered by a school. The learned curriculum, finally, is what students actually learn. Theological educators have written dozens of articles and books about the purposes of theological education, including Niebuhr's (1956) classic mid-Twentieth Century book on the aims of seminary education. In the last 30 years, the time frame during which second-career students entered seminaries in large numbers, four key books (Banks, 1999; Barker & Martin, 2004; Farley, 1983; Kelsey, 1993) discuss the intended curriculum.

Fragmentation in the Curriculum

Farley (1983) and Kelsey (1993) addressed the problem of the fragmentation of the theological curriculum. Farley argued that seminary curricula have lost a unified vision of producing knowledge of God. Instead, curricula are atomized. Narrow subject experts teach in their disciplines (such as theology, New Testament, and preaching), but the curriculum as a whole does not cohere. The theological curriculum is fragmented primarily because, in Farley's view, professors are committed to the research concerns

and distinctive methodologies of their discrete academic disciplines. Kelsey responded to the position of Farley by addressing what was distinctively theological about theological education. After discussing several ways in which contemporary theologians answered that question, he summarized his findings as the tension between Berlin and Athens. The scientific rigor of the Enlightenment research university, symbolized by Berlin, stands in contrast to the pursuit of wisdom consonant with a pre-Enlightenment Christian understanding of the purpose of education, symbolized by Athens. Neither Farley nor Kelsey directly noted the changing student population in seminaries, although both were aware of the voices of women as expressed in feminist theological critiques.

Challenging the Seminary Paradigm

Recently, Banks (1999) and Barker and Martin (2004) have argued in favor of a fundamental shift away from the seminary or university-related divinity school model that dominated theological education in the Twentieth Century. For Banks, theological education for ministers achieves flawed ends by flawed means. He argues that the current system cannot and does not educate mission-oriented leaders or servant leaders. He proposes that seminaries enable students to engage in the practice of ministry during their theological education. Banks' position, in a nutshell, is that theological education is a rarified form of academic study rather than professional education to train missional pastors. A second book challenging the seminary paradigm is a collection of essays edited by Barker and Martin (2004) reporting on a study of training for ministry that sets aside what authors call the clerical paradigm (seminary-trained leaders serving less skilled laity) in favor of highly contextualized training for ministry conducted by judicatories of Christian churches. The authors argue that the point of theological

education should be the ministry in congregations, not the attainment of academic credentials.

Recent books on the intended seminary curriculum construct arguments about what seminaries ought to do. These arguments are rooted in theological commitments and sometimes in the changing demographics of churches. In none of these works is there an extended analysis of the increasing number of second-career students now attending seminaries and the possible implications of their presence for the intended or enacted curriculum.

The Enacted Curriculum

Theological educators have explored a wide variety of issues related to how teaching and learning occur in seminaries. Articles and books have addressed the ramifications of using technology to deliver course content (Delamarter, 2005; Hess, 2005; Jones, 2007), the pedagogical implications of feminist theology (Chopp, 1995; Kim, 2002; Russell, 1998), the challenge of globalization (Roozen, 1993; Stackhouse, 1988; Westfield, 2004), and instructional methods that match the needs of specific disciplines (Brunner, 2005; González, 1993; Witvliet, 2008). Practitioners such as Riccuiti (2003) and Evans (2007) are aware of the diverse backgrounds of students now engaging in theological study and argue in favor of egalitarian pedagogies to teach effectively.

Association of Theological Schools Data

Standard Survey Instruments

In addition to quantitative studies focusing on second-career seminarians, ethnographies of seminaries, and discussions of seminary curricula, an important source

for understanding the seminary experience is data produced by The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), a membership organization comprised of more than 250 schools that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic theological education. ATS collects a wealth of data about theological students using two instruments, the Entering Student Questionnaire (ESQ) and the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ). Member schools receive reports of ESQ and GSQ data comparing their school with peers. Both the ESQ and the GSQ are widely used by theological schools. Because the instruments ask a set menu of questions year after year, the instruments enable schools to track trends over time.

Entering Student Questionnaire

The ESQ asks newly enrolled students questions about their religious background, their understanding of their personally held theological position, their process of deciding to enroll in a specific seminary, and their future plans for ministry. In addition, the ESQ asks students to identify their age, gender, ethnicity, and level of debt. The results are reported in 22 data tables. One hundred thirty-four schools used the ESQ in the fall of 2007-2008. A total of 5,871 students responded (Association of Theological Schools, 2008).

According to the 2008 respondents (Association of Theological Schools, 2008), the most common factor influencing a decision to attend seminary was an individual's experiencing a call from God. Newly enrolled students also commonly reported that they went to seminary because it was an opportunity for study or growth, because they wanted to serve others, and because of intellectual interest in religious or theological questions. Students also stated that they chose to attend seminary because of outward-directed

motivations, including the desire to serve and to make a difference in the church. The most commonly reported reasons for selecting a specific seminary were the school's theological perspective, its academic reputation, its faculty, the spiritual atmosphere of the school, its denominational affiliation, and its curriculum. The least common reasons for choosing a specific school were having a friend on campus, access to other theological schools, the availability of housing, and interdisciplinary or joint degree programs.

Graduating Student Questionnaire

The ESQ asks newly admitted theological students about their background and path to theological study. By contrast, the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) asks graduating students questions about their sources of income during seminary, their personal growth, and their level of satisfaction with skills related to future employment. The GSQ asks graduating students about the value of field education and other academic resources and their future plans for ministry. In addition, the questionnaire asks students to identify their age, gender, ethnicity, and level of debt. The results are reported in 22 data tables. One hundred twenty-eight schools administered the GSQ to 5,052 graduates at the close of the 2006-2007 academic year (Association of Theological Schools, 2007b).

According to 2007 respondents (Association of Theological Schools, 2007b), the most important influences on their educational experience were the faculty, interaction with fellow students, field education, Biblical studies, and the study of history and theology. The 2007 respondents rated ecumenical interaction, worship, multi-ethnic/multicultural contacts, and the community life of the school as being relatively less

important for their educational experience. Respondents reported that field education gave them a better idea of their strengths and weaknesses, improved their pastoral skills, and resulted in greater vocational clarity.

Critique of Published Literature

The published literature examining first- and second-career seminarians has severe limitations. Small-scale empirical studies have not focused on the seminary experience itself. Ethnographies of seminary life (Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, & Marler, 1997; Kleinman, 1984), while rich in detail, shed little light on how the experience might differ for first- and second-career students. The ethnographies convincingly document that the seminary experience includes far more than the intended and enacted curricula. The literature about the intended seminary curriculum carries on a theological discussion about the purposes of seminary education but with little evident concern for those being educated, the students themselves. By contrast, research about students training to be social workers or nurses has explored the struggles of students to balance multiple roles (Gigliotti, 2007; Home, 1997; Hopkins, Boom, & Deal, 2005; Kavern & Webb, 2004; Rifenbary, 1995).

Data collected in the ESQ and GSQ document student responses to the enacted seminary curriculum and shed light on student perceptions of the value of programmed activities (e.g., field education) and spontaneous activities (e.g., interaction between students) at theological schools. ATS aggregates these data by degree program and gender. However, these data are not routinely aggregated by age of the respondent. Thus, the data do not suggest how the perceptions of older and younger students (first- and second-career) might differ.

Many of the responses to ATS instruments are reported as a ranking of items from a set list in order of perceived importance. Simple ranking sheds no light on the possible inter-relationships between elements of a student's theological education. This study using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) probed both elements of student experience and the relationships that respondents perceived between those elements, thereby creating new knowledge about the seminary experience of students. The next section presents the scope and limitations of the study.

Scope and Limitations

This study explores the seminary experience of first-career and second-career theological students in one free-standing Protestant seminary using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Chapter three describes in detail the specific procedures of interactive qualitative analysis (IQA) as employed in this study. Briefly put, the researcher secured permission to interview students enrolled in the M.Div. program at one theological school. Using IQA protocols, the researcher conducted two focus groups, one consisting of first-career students and a second consisting of second-career students. The members of the focus groups identifed key themes (or affinities) of their seminary experience. The researcher then conducted individual interviews with students. In these interviews, students talked about their individual experiences and related their perceptions of how various themes exert influence on other themes. The result of the IQA process is a mindmap grounded in the life world at one theological school. While the results of this study may be applicable to students in other seminaries, in the first instance the results describe the experience of students at a single institution.

Assumptions

Interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) is based on several assumptions. First, interactive qualitative analysis (IQA) assumes that respondents are competent to speak about their lived experience. Second, IQA assumes that, in a non-threatening interview setting, respondents provide truthful answers to questions about the phenomenon under study. Third, IQA assumes that respondents can identify patterns in the themes or elements of their lived experience. Fourth, IQA assumes that researchers diligently following IQA procedures (described in detail in chapter three) can construct a group mindmap accurately describing relationships between various elements identified by respondents. Thus, IQA assumes that the reality experienced by persons in groups is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and that researchers can describe that reality without imposing their own biases on the group or groups being studied.

Definitions

The following terms are frequently used in this study. Chapter three introduces definitions distinctive to interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) and discusses IQA's roots in phenomenology.

1. A *seminary* is a graduate-level school engaged in the training of individuals for professional leadership in the Christian church. Seminaries in the United States and Canada also frequently offer one or more academic degrees in addition to professional degrees. In this study, the term seminary and theological school are used synonymously. A free-standing seminary is one that is not structurally part of a university or college.

2. The *Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree* is the professional graduate degree typically required by Christian denominations as a prerequisite for ordination as a minister or priest. As defined by ATS standards (Association of Theological Schools, 1996), the M.Div. degree requires three years of full-time engagement. In Canada and the United States, the M.Div. degree is to ministers what the Doctor of Law (JD) degree is to lawyers. An M.Div. degree program at a seminary includes the study of the Bible, Christian doctrines, church history, and pastoral arts such as preaching, teaching, and counseling. The pastoral arts are taught in part through supervised placements in congregations or other ministry settings.

3. *First-career students* enroll in seminary more or less directly after completing a bachelor's degree. They are less than 30 years old at the time of seminary enrollment.

4. *Second-career* students enroll in seminary after working in some occupation. They are 30 or older when they begin seminary work. In this study, first- and second-career students and first- and second-career seminarians are used with no difference in meaning. Similarly, theological students and seminarians are used synonymously.

5. *Participants, respondents*, and *informants* are used synonymously to refer to seminarians that took part in focus groups and individual interviews.

6. *Life world* "refers to the commonsense interpretive frames and logics by which individuals prereflectively conceptually organize their perceptions of everyday life" (Fincher, 2007). As used in social science rooted in phenomenology (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Schutz, 1932/1967, 1970), an individual's life world is a product of cultural context and individual experience.

7. *Lived experience*, another phenomenological term, refers to an individual's conscious interpretation of the meaning of events in her or his life world (Schutz, 1967, 45-96). Thus, one's lived experience is a highly personal construal. Two individuals can undergo the "same" event (whether hearing a concert or undergoing a medical test) and come away with quite different lived experiences.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one has introduced the study by arguing the value of research examining the life worlds of first- and second-career seminarians. Chapter two critically reviews the literature about seminary students in the United States, focusing on what is known about first-career and second-career students, the intended and enacted curricula of seminaries, and widely used survey instruments. After noting the limitations of the extant literature, the chapter concludes with the presentation of a conceptual framework for the seminary experience. The framework is rooted in the published literature and a phenomenological approach to social science research. Chapter three describes interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the method used in this study, and explains how the researcher designed the study. The chapter states the rationale for the selection of New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) as a research site, the operationalization of the distinction between first-career and second-career theological students, the composition and conduct of focus groups, and the protocol for generating questions for individual interviews with participants.

Chapter four presents 12 major themes of the seminary experience, as voiced by NCTS participants, as well as the group mindmaps depicting the conceptual worlds of

typical first- and second-career students. Chapter five interprets the life world of seminarians. The chapter analyzes the distinctive ways in which NCTS students who participated in this study understood the relationship between the larger themes of their experience. The chapter relates these themes to the extant literature on the experiences of seminary students and proposes a model for understanding the experience of students in seminary. Based on the light that this study sheds on the seminary experience, finally, chapter five suggests implications for the educational leadership of seminaries and identifies areas for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter does five things. First, it reiterates the problem statement, purpose, and research questions for this study of the life worlds of first- and second-career seminarians at one Protestant seminary. Second, the chapter examines the research literature about seminarians in Canada and the United States, with particular reference to first-career and second-career students pursuing the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree, the professional degree commonly required by Protestant churches as a condition of eligibility for ordination as a minister. Third, the chapter briefly reviews literature about students training for social work and nursing, two helping professions that are similar to ordained ministry. Fourth, the chapter sketches two conceptual frameworks useful for interpreting the experience of seminary students, the ecological theory and a model of the undergraduate student experience. Finally, the chapter presents a model for understanding the experience of students in seminary. This model is drawn from the extant literature about seminary students.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The majority of students entering seminaries in the first decade of the Twenty-First Century in North America do so with work experience in some field. Theological educators recognize that the life experience of a single 22-year-old fresh out of college is different from the life experience of a married 35-year-old (who may also be a parent) that enrolls at the same seminary (Forsberg & Mudge, 1991). However, relatively few studies have taken seriously the breadth in ages represented in the student population of

graduate theological schools. The studies focusing on second-career seminarians that have been published, as chapter two of this study documents, focus on motivation to attend seminary (Jones, 1996), learning styles (Reistroffer, 1997), and leadership practices (Hillman, 2004). Such research does little to shed light on what the seminary experience means to students themselves, whether students are in seminary during their odyssey years or are older.

This study explores the seminary experience of first-career and second-career theological students in one free-standing Protestant seminary using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Specifically, this study investigates four research questions:

1. What themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?
2. How do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?
3. How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?
4. Do first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?

Seminarians in Canada and the United States: A Review of the Literature

Introduction

Before the 1970s, the vast majority of students studying for the Christian ministry in North America were young, white men. Since then, women and older students have

entered seminary education in large numbers. In the fall of 2006, 39 percent of students in M.Div. programs were age 30 or under, 26 percent were between 30 and 39, 21 percent were 40 to 49, and 13 percent were age 50 or older (Association of Theological Schools, 2006). A working distinction developed between first-career and second-career students (Hicks, 1981; Larsen & Shopshire, 1988). *First-career* students enroll in seminary more or less directly after completing a bachelor's degree. They are less than 30 at the time of seminary enrollment. *Second-career* students enroll in seminary after working in some occupation. They are 30 or older when they begin theological study. Researchers often have not provided a reason for the working distinction between first- and second-career students. Reistroffer (1997), for instance, made a distinction between traditional and non-traditional students in her study of the relationship between learning styles and career choices of American seminary students. She nowhere stated her criterion for placing a student into one category or the other, although tacitly the distinction was between older and younger students.

Studies and information sources germane to an exploration of first-career and second-career seminarians fall into five general categories. The first category is literature that explicitly takes note of first-career and second-career students. The second is ethnographies of seminary life that implicitly bear on differences and similarities between first-career and second-career students without making such a discussion central to their foci. The third category is a large literature on the purposes of theological education and a smaller literature about how seminaries go about teaching. These studies, thus, describe the intended and enacted curricula of seminaries (Porter, 2006). The fifth category is the

data that The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) compiles regularly about incoming theological students and new graduates.

ATS is a membership organization of more than 250 schools that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic theological education. The organization's Commission on Accrediting, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits member schools and their degree programs (Association of Theological Schools, 2009). ATS member schools include university-affiliated schools such as Yale Divinity School, Harvard University Divinity School, Howard University School of Divinity, and the University of Chicago Divinity School. Free-standing seminaries that are members of ATS include evangelical schools such as Fuller Theological Seminary, mainline Protestant schools such as Luther Seminary, and Catholic schools such as Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and the Washington Theological Union. In American Protestant Christianity, *mainline* churches refer to denominations that employ critical methods to interpret the Bible. These churches generally ordain women as pastors and side with liberal political ideas about social policy. By contrast, *evangelical* churches generally do not use critical methods to interpret the Bible, do not ordain women, and side with political conservatives about social policy (Marty, 2005).

This chapter will demonstrate that, despite ongoing compilation of survey data about who seminary students are and their self-reported levels of growth and satisfaction with the programs and services provided them during their seminary education, relatively little research addresses the travails and triumphs of theological students from the point of view of the students themselves. The research that does exist does not focus on the experience of second-career students.

First-Career and Second-Career Seminarians Examined

There are three categories of published literature explicitly examining first- and second-career seminarians. Some articles take note of second-career students as a new trend in theological education and comment on it, primarily based on anecdotal data. In a second category are focused empirical studies of second-career students. Finally, two large-scale studies surveyed thousands of first-career and second-career students in 1986 and 1991 to explore similarities and differences between them. This section discusses each category in turn.

Second-Career Students as New Phenomenon

As observers of theological education noticed the increase in the number of second-career students in theological schools, they began to muse on this new phenomenon (Marty, 1985) and to reflect on their own experience of working with older students (Forsberg & Mudge, 1991). University of Chicago historian Marty speculated that second-career students include those who failed in other professions and who, after a profound religious awakening, "go to theological schools to get Big Answers and Slick Skills to put to work in professional ministry" (p. 117). Forsberg and Mudge, both deans in seminaries, noted that second-career students had multiple allegiances. They frequently were engaged in the roles of parent, spouse, and part-time employee as well as student. Second-career students often expected that the seminary would help to cultivate their spiritual lives. While second-career students were realistic about what to expect from churches, they often expected more emotional support from the seminary community than it could provide. As the numbers of second-career students increased, earlier

characterizations of seminary students (Campbell, 1965; Hulme, 1960; Roscoe & Girling, 1970; Van Dusen, 1959) required renewed study.

Small-Scale Studies

Two empirical studies compared first-career and second-career seminarians, among other groups, on variables of research interest. One other study focused exclusively on the motivations of second-career seminarians.

Learning styles and career choice. Reistroffer (1997) studied the relationship between learning styles and career choices of 347 students at six mainline Protestant seminaries using gender and first-career versus second-career students (in her usage, traditional versus non-traditional) as the main subgroups. She rooted her research in Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning. She found no significant differences in the learning styles between first-career and second-career students. All groups of respondents preferred the career of pastor from the eight ministerial careers surveyed in the Inventory of Religious Activities and Interests. She found that second-career students were more firmly committed to the career preference of pastor than were first-career students.

Leadership practices. Hillman (2004) studied differences in leadership practices among 330 masters-level students at Dallas Theological Seminary, using the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2000; 2002). He found a statistically significant difference between scores of the older and younger students (first- and second-career students) on the Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart sub-scales of the LPI-Self, an instrument that maps self-perceptions of one's leadership abilities. Older students scored higher. There were no significant differences between first-career and second-career seminarians on the

Inspiring a Shared Vision sub-scale. The seminary's programs of field education and spiritual formation did not appear to be significant factors in predicting the leadership practices of students, although students actively engaged in 10 or more hours of ministerial practice per week scored significantly higher on some LPI-Self subscales than students not engaged in ministry practice.

Entering ministry. In a third small-scale study, Jones (1996) examined the motivations of second-career seminarians regarding their decision to enter ministry. The study was rooted in psychological theories of innate motivation (Tomkins, 1995). The researcher conducted interviews with 10 second-career students attending theological schools in Ohio. Jones concluded that the need to belong and the need to serve others, both innate mechanisms, were keys to understanding the vocational choice of the research participants. In the large scale studies reviewed below, researchers were also concerned about motivations attracting students to seminary study and ministry.

Large-Scale Studies of First- and Second-Career Students

Larsen and Shopshire 1988 study. The largest sustained studies of first- and second-career seminarians (Larsen, 1995; Larsen & Shopshire, 1988) were published as special issues of *Theological Education*, the journal of ATS. Larsen and Shopshire, noting "a paucity of comprehensive research concerning the older seminary student" (p. 16), constructed a questionnaire and distributed it to approximately 5,000 students enrolled in M.Div. or equivalent degree programs in ATS schools. Their report had "as its express purpose the examination of the phenomenon of older students on United States seminary campuses" (p. 12). The researchers also analyzed available data about the age of theological students. They noted that data about the age of students was not

routinely collected. Based on the best available evidence, they concluded that the mean age for students enrolled in seminaries rose from 25.4 years in 1962 to 26.0 years in 1975. By 1986, the mean age had risen to 31.1 years with the median of 28.0 years. Table 1 summarizes the age distribution for Protestant and Roman Catholic students enrolled in M.Div. programs in 1986.

Table 1

Age Distribution of M.Div. Students 1986 (percent)

	<30	30-39	40 & Over
Protestants	56	30	14
Roman Catholics	60	28	12

Source: Larsen and Shopshire (1988, p. 27).

These data document that first-career students (those under 30) were the majority among both Protestants and Roman Catholics, but that second-career students comprised 40 percent or more of students in both traditions.

Larsen and Shopshire (1988) distributed a questionnaire to students at a stratified, random sample of ATS schools designed to parallel the denominational diversity of ATS member schools. The questionnaire, constructed after a literature review and consultation with experts in theological education, was circulated in 1986. The researchers placed second-career students within a framework of adult psychological development (Erikson, 1959; Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1976) and career transition (Holland, 1973; Osherson, 1980). The survey asked questions about what drew individuals to seminary study, the financial costs of attending seminary, and what students experienced during seminary. Results were aggregated by age (using the categories of under 30, 30 to 39, and 40 and

over), gender, and denomination. This discussion focuses on differences and similarities between first- and second-career students.

Larsen and Shopshire (1988) discovered that the most common motivator towards a ministerial vocation was an experience of divine call. The second most common motivator was church influence. Students over 30 reported that a meaningless job or a major traumatic event (such as divorce or death) motivated them to attend seminary at higher rates than students under 30. Other questions in the study focused on the experiences of respondents after entering seminary. Fewer than half of Protestant students affirmed that financial aid at their seminary was adequate; slightly more than half of Roman Catholic students stated that aid was adequate. Respondents were asked about sources of stress during their seminary experience. Table 2 lists the top 10 sources of stress for Protestants and Roman Catholics during seminary study, as reported by participants. These data reveal that concern about having enough time was the highest reported source of stress for Protestant students across all age groups, and was the second-highest reported source of stress for Catholic students. Concern about finances was the second-highest reported source of stress across age groups for Protestants. Financial concerns were rated six-highest by Catholics. Catholic students reported that academic expectations were the highest reported source of stress across all age groups. This source of stress was the fourth-highest for Protestants. For both Catholics and Protestants, the rate of stress produced by examinations increased with age.

Larsen and Shopshire (1988) concluded that, despite the preconception among some that young minds are more malleable than older minds, second-career seminarians could make the adjustment to seminary life and meet the academic expectations of

theological study. They also found that older students reported higher levels of self-confidence (p. 80) and were more hopeful about life (p. 82) than younger students.

Table 2

Top Ten Reported Sources of Stress While in Seminary (percent)

	Total	<30	30-39	40 & Over
Protestants				
Enough time	60	57	61	68
Financial concerns	51	54	53	34
Personal expectations	38	38	35	42
Academic expectations	37	39	36	31
Examinations	16	15	16	21
Relationship with spouse	14	12	16	16
Different theology	12	12	11	11
Job availability	11	12	9	11
Relationship with friend	8	10	5	2
Others' expectations	7	8	5	4
Roman Catholics				
Academic expectations	53	51	52	60
Enough time	47	42	55	51
Personal expectations	46	49	41	40
Others' expectations	28	29	31	19
Examinations	24	20	29	39
Financial concerns	17	17	24	5
Relationship with friend	17	21	16	3
Different theology	16	16	14	18
Housing	5	4	7	4
Medical problem	3	2	3	6

Source: Larsen and Shopshire (1988, p. 61).

The Larsen 1995 study. In a follow-up study, Larsen (1995) distributed the same questionnaire to a new stratified sample of seminarians in 1991. He also re-surveyed seminarians from the 1986 survey, approximately five years after their graduation. The second study sought to explore differences between first-career and second-career seminarians, as well as compare differences in responses between those enrolled in

theological study and graduates engaged in the practice of ministry. This discussion focuses on responses of seminary students. Larsen reported that by 1991, the median age of a seminary student had risen to 32.1 years (p. 9). The 1991 respondents reported that the commonest motivator towards a ministerial vocation was the experience of divine call. The second most common motivator was church influence. These results are consistent with the earlier survey. Students over 30 reported that a meaningless job or a major traumatic event (such as divorce or death) motivated them to attend seminary at higher rates than students under 30. Once again, these results echo the earlier study. Indeed, in most cases there was little variation between the 1986 and 1991 data. In another instance, Larsen compared responses of the theological students' sense of belonging to the seminary community. The data are summarized in Table 3. The responses from 1991 seminarians echo those of the 1986 sample. In both groups, no more than 10.1 percent disagreed with the statement that they felt themselves part of their seminary community. The differences between first-career and second-career students were modest.

Table 3

Feel Part of Seminary Community (percent)

	Total	<30	30-39	40 & Over
1986 Seminarians				
Agree	79.0	79.5	77.5	80.9
Neutral	13.0	13.2	12.6	12.7
Disagree	8.0	7.2	9.9	6.4
1991 Seminarians				
Agree	78.5	80.2	74.4	81.1
Neutral	13.3	12.1	15.5	12.1
Disagree	8.2	7.7	10.1	6.7

Source: Larsen (1995, p. 69).

Summary and Critique

The two large-scale studies comparing first-career and second-career students found profound similarities between the two groups. Both first-career and second-career students frequently chose to engage in theological study because of a sense of divine call and their participation in church life. Both groups reported that they were stressed during their theological studies by high expectations, financial concerns, and limited time. Members of both groups largely felt a sense of belonging to their seminary community. Second-career students, on the other hand, were more likely than first-career students to report that a major life trauma or job dissatisfaction motivated them to begin theological study.

Both the Larsen and Shopshire (1988) and Larsen (1995) studies relied heavily on survey methods. As instruments of data collection, surveys are more effective at charting attitudes than capturing the complexity of lived experience, especially surveys that use closed-ended questions with limited options for response (Mertens, 2005). The ethnographies discussed in the next section describe the contextually situated micro-cultures of three seminaries and provide another lens for understanding the seminary experience.

Ethnographies of Seminary Life

A second category of literature relevant for researchers concerned with first-career and second-career seminarians consists of ethnographic accounts that implicitly bear on differences and similarities between the lived experiences of first-career and second-career students. There are two such ethnographies (Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, &

Marler 1997; Kleinman, 1984) in which researchers spent extended periods of time studying the culture of their informants. Balmer (1989) briefly visited Dallas Theological Seminary, from which he wrote a short, highly impressionistic chapter about the school, focusing on its defense of the theological doctrine of pre-millennial dispensationalism.

Shaping Humanistic Professionals at Midwest Seminary

In the academic year 1977-1978, sociologist Sherryl Kleinman (1984) conducted field work at Midwest Seminary, a Protestant theological school in the Chicago area. Kleinman lived in a student dormitory and employed a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach. She rooted her field work in the sea change in understanding of the role of Protestant ministers that began in the 1960s. The inherited role of ministers as authorities mediating transcendent religious truth was replaced, in many parts of American Protestantism, by a far more secularized understanding of religion and the ministerial role. In Kleinman's terms, ministers became humanistic professionals whose core activity was pastoral counseling of a "nonjudgmental, appreciative, and supportive" kind (p. 11). Kleinman traced how seminary students became socialized into the role of humanistic professionals. She interpreted their experience in the framework of deprofessionalization (Haug, 1973; Toren, 1975), the increasing loss of monopoly power over clients.

At Midwest Seminary, the researcher discovered that the discourse of "community" was pivotal in shaping student understanding not only of how to behave in the seminary community, but also how they should relate as ministers to future congregants. Most students at Midwest were in their middle-to-late 20s, lived in dormitories, ate together in one cafeteria, and socialized with other seminarians.

Approximately 30 percent of the students were women, 70 percent were men. Kleinman (1984) wrote in detail on the complex issues that women faced as they negotiated their emerging identities as ministers, traditionally a male role. Her account makes evident that, for students, shared meals, worship, and dormitory life were as important to the acquisition of an identity as a minister as classroom lectures and reading assignments. Nowhere in her study, however, did Kleinman write specifically about second-career seminarians.

Getting the Message at Two Seminaries

Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) conducted the most meticulously researched ethnography to date of any North American Protestant seminary. *Being There* is a dual ethnography of one mainline and one evangelical seminary. Growing from their reading of the micro-cultures of congregations (Hopewell, 1987) and corporations (Ouichi & Wilkins, 1985) and rooted explicitly in a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the researchers wanted to study how seminary culture socialized or formed seminarians. Two researchers studied each school over the course of three years (1989-1992), spending at least 30 days a year per researcher onsite. They lived in student dormitories, attended classes, interviewed most faculty and administrators, and attended trustee meetings. The length of their study enabled them to establish relationships with some students that lasted for the typical length of an M.Div. program. Thus, they observed an entire cycle of student life from enrollment to graduation.

The researchers found that the faculty and administration of each school promoted a dominant message. At Evangelical Theological Seminary (ETS), that message was that God's plan for the world was inerrantly inscribed in the Bible, and that students should

cultivate the discipline to understand God's written plan and live by it. The answers to the ethical or philosophical questions posed by twentieth-century life were definitely stated in scripture. The short-hand for this message was that ETS was "Reformed" or "very Reformed" in its approach. At Mainline Theological seminary (MTS), the dominant message was that the purpose of religious institutions was to transform social structures to promote justice for all persons.

Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) reported that, although students understood the dominant message at each seminary, students created their own distinctive cultures. At ETS, most students valued emotionally charged worship and prayer and believed that God intervened by signs in their everyday experience. At MTS, most students perceived that they were either more liberal or more conservative theologically than the faculty. Many students understood ministry to be a way to serve the needs of people rather than to reform social structures to make them more just.

Despite distinct differences in theological understanding and pedagogy at ETS and MTS, researchers concluded that both schools used the same educational process. The process centered on the encounter between students and the school's dominant message. During theological education, students interact with and resist the message, and ultimately create a personal synthesis reflecting both the school's message and the commitments and life experiences that students had before coming to seminary. At both schools, some students appeared to move through the formal curriculum without appearing to engage the dominant message to any discernable extent. Table 4 depicts the model of theological education that emerges from Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler's (1997) work. If Keleinman's (1984) work is read with the interpretive lense of

the dominant message model, the data suggest that the dominant message at the Midwest Seminary was that students should take on the role of the Christian pastor as a humanistic professional.

Table 4

Students and a Seminary's Dominant Message

Students Before Seminary	Students In Seminary	Students Leaving Seminary
Life experiences Theological commitments	Dominant message of the school ●Exposure ●Experimentation ●Resistance	Personal synthesis containing elements of dominant message

Based on Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997).

Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) did not gather data on the ages of students at ETS, but surmised that they were "substantially younger" (p. 12) than students at MTS, where the average age of a student was 38. The researchers did not specifically comment on first-career versus second-career students at ETS. On the other hand, MTS students took part in a wide variety of formal and informal affiliation groups organized by race, gender, age, and interests. The MTS culture, researchers discovered, encouraged individuals to socially locate themselves (African American older single woman; White younger married man, etc.) and then reflect on ways in which the seminary practiced its gospel of inclusivity, or not. In the middle of a passionate exchange about inclusivity in the student publication in 1991, Peter Tomas, a first-career student, argued that MTS' attention to second-career students undermined the school's commitment to scholarly standards. Several second-career students responded, arguing that their credentials were

more than adequate. They called Tomas biased against part-time, second-career seminarians. In the entire study, this exchange at MTS about the academic ability of second-career students is the only discussion of explicit differences between first-career and second-career students.

Summary

The ethnographic accounts reviewed here attended to what researchers observed, and how that behavior fit into theories such as deprofessionalization or organizational culture. Both ethnographies reveal that theological education involves intended activities such as class work and community worship, and the informal activities of students. Theological schools, like all professional schools, have stated purposes and create curricula to achieve those purposes. The next section briefly reviews the literature on the intended curriculum in theological schools.

The Intended Curriculum: What Seminaries Hope To Do

Porter (2006) distinguishes between various meanings of a school's curriculum. The intended curriculum refers to explicit statements about what ought to be taught. Course descriptions in a school's catalog describe the intended curriculum. The enacted curriculum refers to the various kinds of instruction actually delivered by a school. The learned curriculum, finally, is what students actually learn. This section discusses the intended curriculum in North American theological seminaries, focusing on the past 40 years.

Introduction

In the past hundred years, theological educators have written dozens of articles and books about the purposes of theological education. Representative of a vast literature

are Brown (1934), the Cornwall Collective (1980), Lazarro (1952), Nelson (1997), and Wheeler, Miller, and Schuth (2005). Early in the Twentieth Century, Warfield (1909) defended the dogmatic rigor of Presbyterian seminaries. Kelly's (1924) survey of the state of theological education found that Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Episcopal seminaries followed a traditional curriculum that dealt "largely with historical, dogmatic and linguistic studies" (p. 88), while theologically progressive or liberal seminaries included courses on the specific duties of pastors and the emerging field of the psychology of religion. Niebuhr's (1956) classic book on the aims of seminary education, commissioned by the American Association of Theological Schools (which later changed its name to the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada), took note of the changing expectations for the Protestant ministerial role. Ministers were to labor to effect social change in their local communities in addition to performing traditional duties such as preaching and counseling the troubled. As the century progressed, many theological schools accepted the concept that clinical training was desirable for seminarians (Hiltner, 1967) and incorporated supervised professional experiences in congregations or hospitals into their curricula (Hall, 1992).

The Intended Seminary Curriculum in a Time of Pluralism

In the last 40 years, the time frame during which second-career students entered seminaries in large numbers, the debate about the intended curriculum in theological schools took a new turn because of an increasing openness in theological schools to issues such as globalization, liberation theology, large numbers of Christian immigrants to North America, and the increasing presence of women both as faculty members and students (Holifield, 2007). Farley (1983) argued that seminary curricula have lost a

unified vision of producing knowledge of God. Instead, curricula are atomized. Narrow subject experts teach in their disciplines (such as theology or New Testament), but the curriculum as a whole does not hang together. Farley's critique was aimed at all sorts of theological study, although he comments that his position is not an assault on "the validity of education for specific activities and skills," (p. 87 note 37), such as the training of ministers. The theological curriculum is fragmented primarily, in Farley's view, because professors are committed to the research concerns and distinctive methodologies of their academic disciplines.

Kelsey (1992, 1993) responded to the position of Farley (1983, 1988) and others (Hough & Cobb, 1985; Stackhouse, 1988; Wood, 1985) by addressing what was distinctively theological about theological education. After discussing several ways in which contemporary theologians, including feminists such as the Mud Flower Collective (1985), answered that question, he summarized his findings as the tension between Berlin and Athens, the scientific rigor of the Enlightenment research university on the one hand, and the pursuit of wisdom consonant with pre-Enlightenment Christian understanding of the purpose of education on the other. Neither Farley, Kelsey, nor most other discussions of the intended curriculum (Anderson, 2000; Wheeler & Farley, 1991) directly noted the changing student population in seminaries, although Farley and Kelsey were aware of feminist critiques of patriarchal church structures, including seminaries.

Challenging the Seminary Paradigm

The literature discussed in the previous section assumes the continued value of seminaries and university-related divinity schools as the loci for training future ministers and other church leaders. Several voices (Banks, 1999; Barker & Martin, 2004; Hough &

Wheeler, 1988) have argued in favor of a fundamental shift away from the seminary or university-related divinity school model that dominated theological education in the Twentieth Century. For Banks (1999), the reigning system values academic rigor at the expense of shaping students to become mission-oriented leaders. He proposed that seminaries change their ways of educating students so that they learn how to engage in the practice of ministry during their theological education, rather than being thought of as novices learning ideas so that, after graduation, they may begin to engage in ministry. Banks argued that students would become better pastors if they saw the primary context of their training as congregations rather than the seminary campus. He suggested that high quality theological education could be achieved by apprenticing groups of students to competent pastors. Essays edited by Barker and Martin (2004) reported on a study of training for ministry that sets aside the clerical paradigm (seminary-trained leaders serving less skilled laity) in favor of highly contextualized training for ministry conducted by judicatories of various Christian churches. They noted that the seminary model is becoming increasingly expensive to maintain as the membership of many Protestant churches remains flat or declines and offerings to support theological education decline in real terms. The authors contended that theological education should emphasize the ability to work collegially with members of churches rather than academic rigor (for instance, the study of the Bible in its original languages).

The Intended Curriculum: Summary and Critique

Discussions of the intended curriculum of seminaries in the past 40 years construct normative arguments about what seminaries ought to do. These arguments are rooted in theological commitments and the changing demographics of churches. The

authors are aware that there is not consensus about what theological schools ought to teach or the kind of graduates they ought to produce. In Holifield's (2007) phrase, the ministry is currently a divided vocation in which some ministers highly value traditional practices while others intentionally experiment in order to relate constructively to contemporary society. Despite calls for a turn away from ministerial training in seminaries, completion of a seminary degree remains required for those seeking ordination in the Catholic Church and most Protestant denominations. In none of the literature on the intended curriculum is there extended discussion of the increasing number of second-career students now attending seminaries and possible implications for the intended or enacted curriculum.

The Enacted Curriculum

The previous section focused on the intended seminary curriculum. This section summarizes research and practitioner observation about the enacted curriculum, the instruction and formation that seminaries actually deliver to students. This section has three parts. The first part discusses teaching and learning as seen through the practice of instructors in theological schools. The second part summarizes two state-of-the-art reports, one by Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino (2006) and another by Aleshire (2008). The third part comments on the reality of the diverse student population that is now engaging in theological education in North America.

Teaching and Learning through the Eyes of Practitioners

Theological educators have explored a wide variety of issues related to how teaching and learning occur in seminaries. Articles and books have addressed the ramifications of using technology to deliver course content, the pedagogical implications

of feminist theology, the challenge of globalization and instructional methods that match the particular needs of specific disciplines. This section surveys this practitioner literature on pedagogy.

Technology. Jones' (2007) article on his experiences using technology to teach missiology (reflection on how Christians engage in the church's mission of proclamation, service, and advocacy) exemplifies concerns raised by seminary professors about using emerging educational technology (Ascough, 2002; Delamarter, 2005; Hess, 2005; Jones, 2007; Litchfield, 1999; Ramsey, 2002; Shore, 2007). Jones argued that the power of technology was its ability to deliver video clips (for instance, church processions from Kerala, South India) into the classroom. Thus, digital technology brought new visual texts to the attention of students. Such odd texts might stimulate classroom discussion, but, according to Jones, could sometimes overwhelm students into silence. He also noted the danger of using these complex visual texts to exoticize peoples and practices that appear to be strikingly different from North American experience. Hess argued that educators concerned about the impact of popular culture must engage digital technology, since digital technology is pervasive, from *VeggieTales* religious cartoons to music downloads. She did not prescribe best practices for how to use technology in the seminary classroom, but instead argued that new technology requires a new kind of literacy. She contended that those wishing to transmit the Christian message must understand emerging media in order to make connections between the tradition and contemporary hearers.

Feminist theology. The literature on the pedagogical implications of feminist theology (Chopp, 1995; Dewey, 1989; Kim, 2002; Morán, 2001; Russell, 1998) points to

the need to take the presence of women seriously as subjects. Chopp (1995) argued that the presence of large numbers of women in theological study necessitated a fundamental change in pedagogy that would take seriously the reality of patriarchy in the church and the academy, and move to educational practices that use metaphors of "quilting, weaving, and constructing" (p. 73) rather than hierarchical metaphors of transmitting tradition without critique. Such an interactive, non-hierarchical pedagogy honors the epistemological convictions of feminists (Hekman, 1990; Hill Collins, 1990). Echoing earlier calls by Christian feminist theologians (Cornwall Collective, 1980; Mud Flower Collective, 1985), Chopp asserted that educational practices should embody justice and dialogue with "new voices representing the pluralism within the culture as a whole and within theological education" (p. 113).

Globalization. The term globalization describes the increased connections between peoples, economies, and cultures in a world system (Robertson, 1992; Wallerstein, 1974-1980), especially since the end of World War Two. In the academic study of religion, globalization has led to a stunning array of re-readings of traditional theological texts from the point of view of self-consciously socially situated authors (Ott & Netland, 2006; Pedersen, Lam, & Lodberg, 2002; Sugirtharajah, 2006). North American theological schools have responded with intentional efforts to include viewpoints of those living outside of Europe or North America, as well as recognizing the social location of voices in the so-called first world (Evans, Evans, & Roozen, 1993; Roozen, 1993; Samuel, 2001; Stackhouse, 1988; Thomas, 1989; Westfield, 2004). The collection edited by Evans, Evans, and Roozen (1993), for instance, documented specific instances of seminary faculties working to change teaching in order to "prepare leaders

for building up a Church able and willing to respond to the challenge of global witness and service" (p. 4). Many schools use experiential learning to place North American students in other settings, in order to provide first-hand contact with a culture other than the student's own.

Teaching in a specific discipline. A third subset of practitioner literature describes pedagogy in a specific theological discipline. Professors teaching in seminaries identify themselves with their disciplines (Wheeler, Miller, & Schuth, 2005). Such teachers have written about the pedagogical challenges of teaching their specific disciplines (Aymer, 2005; Bretzke, 2000; Brunner, 2005; González, 1993; Grieb, 2003; Witvliet, 2008). Brunner (2005), for instance, used a focus group of students to assist his seminary's re-evaluation of courses in Christian history and theology. Walker-Jones (2008) wrote about his use of a single literary critic, Northrop Frye, to shape an introductory course on biblical studies in an era in which methods of biblical studies have proliferated. Brelsford and Rogers' (2008) collection of essays describe changes made in pedagogy over time at Candler School of Theology (Emory University) to integrate teaching and learning in ways that are accountable to academy, church, and society.

Summary of practitioner literature. The practitioner literature reviewed here, whether concerned with technology, globalization, feminism, or theological disciplines, voices the hard-won experience of professors functioning as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983). Most of the authors come down on the side of an egalitarian pedagogy such as Friere's (1970) or Palmer's (1998).

The State-of-the-Art Reports

Two recent publications provide overviews of North American seminaries that make broad judgments about the state of seminary education. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching funded Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino's (2006) examination of best teaching practices at theological schools in the United States that train rabbis, ministers, and priests. Using appreciative inquiry methods (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999), the researchers explored how seminary educators fostered the knowledge and skills needed by those who will engage in clergy practice. The researchers visited a sample of 18 theological schools and conducted an online survey of graduates and students in their final year of seminary training. Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino found that schools used distinctive pedagogies for the interpretation of tradition, the formation of student apprentices into professional identity and habits, the explicit analysis of social context, and *performance*, understood as the broad range of professional activities that clergy engage in, "from preaching, liturgical leadership, teaching and counseling, to the leadership of neighborhood food banks and interfaith housing initiatives" (p. 157). They found such pedagogies both in the classroom and in such settings as field education, programs and opportunities for spiritual formation, and community worship.

Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino (2006) observed instruction, interviewed administrators and professors, and surveyed students and graduates. Their informants were aware of the diversity of students now engaging in theological study as more women, "historically marginalized students" (p. 55), and older students routinely enrolled in seminaries. The researchers concluded, however, that "no school we visited

pedagogically embraced the full range of differences faculty encountered among its students" (p. 58), despite rhetoric to the contrary. The researchers discovered that teaching methods varied widely and that institutional cultures were distinctive. A key difference between various theological schools was the balance between academic engagement (understood as mastering the vocabulary, texts, and canons of argument of various theological disciplines), engagement in formation (the spiritual life of the future priest, minister, or rabbi), and professional practices through field education. The researchers became convinced that the best model for understanding the results of their study was one "viewing all forms of seminary learning as inherently involved in the cultivation of clergy practice" (p. 377).

A second state-of-the-art report is Aleshire's (2008) assessment of what theological seminaries are doing well. Rooted in appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999), Aleshire's conclusions are drawn from his personal observations of theological schools as executive director of ATS for more than a decade. Aleshire notes that seminaries are hybrid institutions, linked both to expectations of the higher education community and the churches. As institutions accountable to the churches, seminaries "have a unique value-driven culture" (p. 116). Aleshire draws attention to the complex, multiple roles now played by seminaries. Drawing on language coined by David Tiede (longtime president of Luther Seminary), Aleshire notes that seminaries function as *abbey*, *academy*, and *apostolate.* Seminaries function as abbeys because they are inextricably connected to the values and traditions of specific Christian churches. Seminaries function as academic institutions because, over time, they "follow the conventions of the broader world of higher education" (p. 140) and are concerned with

issues such as the affordability of their educational programs. Finally, seminaries function as apostolates because they support Christian viewpoints, even as the social prestige, influence, and sheer numbers of Christians wane in the broader culture. In Aleshire's view, seminaries have a future to the extent that they integrate the abbey, academy, and apostolate roles with the organizational potency that is possible because seminaries are often free-standing, self-supporting, learning organizations. In other words, seminaries can be robust places for training precisely because they are schools.

Teaching a Diverse Student Population

Riccuiti (2003) took note of the diversity of the student population now enrolled in her theological school. Many of her students were second- or third-career students who lived off campus, commuted a considerable distance to school, and engaged in part-time study. Her students were also diverse in terms of denominational affiliation. Riccuiti's students had diverse backgrounds and were simultaneously ministers, students, and parents. Therefore, she called for a compassionate approach to pedagogy that honored the complexity of the life worlds of students. Such pedagogy, consistent with Freire's (1970) approach, is profoundly dialogical and de-emphasizes the hierarchical distance between instructor and student. Riccuiti is not alone in commenting on the diverse backgrounds of her students (Brunner, 2005; Cephus, 2004; Evans, 2007; Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino, 2006; Shaw, 2004). She is virtually unique in the recent literature on theological pedagogy in identifying the presence of both first- and second-career students in the classroom, each with her distinctive life course, as an important factor that should shape teaching.

The Enacted Curriculum: Summary and Critique

Theological educators have produced a wealth of articles discussing the enacted curriculum. Themes of concern include technology, feminist theology, globalization, teaching in specific disciplines, and the growing diversity found in a theological school's student body in terms of age, ethnicity, experience as church members, and academic preparation. Most of this literature is a reflection on the experience of one instructor, one department, or a single school. Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino's (2006) recent study of several schools reinforced the conclusion reached by Kleinman (1984) and Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) that both the formal and informal curricula work in concert to shape students.

Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Data

To this point, this chapter has reviewed literature that explicitly examines the phenomenon of second-career seminarians, ethnographies of the seminary experience, and literature about the intended and enacted theological curricula. This section turns to data produced by The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), a membership organization of more than 250 schools that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic theological education. ATS collects a wealth of data about theological students using two instruments, the Entering Student Questionnaire (ESQ) and the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ). Member schools receive reports of ESQ and GSQ data comparing their school with a set of peer institutions. Both the ESQ and the GSQ are widely used by theological schools. Because the instruments ask a set menu of questions year after year, these surveys enable schools

to track trends. The questions that ATS asks implicitly point to what the association values in theological education.

Entering Student Questionnaire

The Entering Student Questionnaire (ESQ) provides a wealth of data about newly enrolled seminarians. The ESQ was first used in its current form during the 1996-1997 academic year (Lonsway, 2001). The ESQ asks newly enrolled students questions about their religious background, theological beliefs, process of deciding to enroll in a specific seminary, and future plans for ministry. In addition, the ESQ asks students to reveal their age, gender, ethnicity, and level of debt. The results are reported in 22 data tables. One hundred thirty-four schools used the ESQ in the fall of 2007-2008. A total of 5,871 students responded (Association of Theological Schools, 2008).

This section reports fall 2004 and fall 2007 results on two questionnaire items, the importance of factors in deciding to attend seminary and the top reasons for choosing a particular school. Table 5 lists the relative importance of 16 factors reported by women and men affecting their decisions to attend seminary. The table is sorted by descending frequency for the fall 2007 results. Echoing the findings of Larsen and Shopshire (1988) and Larsen (1991), the most common factor influencing a decision to attend seminary was an individual's experience of a call from God. Newly enrolled students also commonly reported that they went to seminary to study and because of intellectual interest in theological questions. Respondents frequently reported that they pursued theological education to discern God's will, because of a desire to serve others, and to make a difference in the church. By contrast, factors rated as having no importance or

Table 5

Importance of Factors in Decision to Pursue Theological Education

	Fall 2004				Fall 2007			
	Male N=4,005		Female N=3,056		Male N=3,526		Female N=2,297	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Experienced call from God	4.4	1.0	4.4	1.0	4.3	1.1	4.4	1.0
Opportunity for study/growth	4.1	1.0	4.4	.08	4.2	0.9	4.4	0.8
Desire to serve others	4.1	1.0	4.2	1.0	4.1	1.0	4.3	0.9
Intellectual interest in religious/theological questions	4.0	1.1	4.0	1.1	4.1	1.0	4.1	1.0
To discern God's will	3.8	1.3	4.0	1.2	3.8	1.3	4.0	1.2
Desire to make a difference in life of church	4.0	1.1	3.9	1.2	4.0	1.1	3.9	1.2
Experience of the community life of a local church	3.3	1.3	3.3	1.3	3.3	1,3	3.3	1.3
Encouragement of clergy	3.3	1.3	3.2	1.4	3.3	1.3	3.2	1.4
Experience of pastoral counseling/spiritual direction	3.1	1.4	3.1	1.5	3.1	1.4	3.1	1.4
Influence of family or spouse	3.1	1.4	2.9	1.5	3.2	1.4	3.0	1.4
Search for meaning in life	2.7	1.4	2.9	1.4	2.7	1.4	3.0	1.4
Influence of friend(s)	2.6	1.2	2.6	1.2	2.7	1.4	2.7	1.2
Desire to preserve traditions of the church	2.6	1.3	2.4	1.3	2.7	1.3	2.5	1.3
Experience in campus Christian organization	2.3	1.4	2.2	1.4	2.3	1.3	2.3	1.4
Desire to administer the sacraments	2.4	1.4	2.2	1.4	2.4	1.4	2.2	1.4
Major life event (e.g., a death, divorce)	1.7	1.2	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.2	1.9	1.3

1 No importance; 2 Little importance; 3 Somewhat important; 4 Important; 5 Very Important

Source: Association of Theological Schools (2005, Table 15; 2008, Table 15).

little importance for pursuing theological education were a major life event such as a death or divorce, experience in a campus Christian organization, and the desire to administer the sacraments of the church.

Lonsway's (2001) analysis of ESQ results for the period 1996-2001 indicated that experiencing a call from God and the desire to serve others "virtually tied for first and second in each of the years of the survey" (p. 4). During these years, the next highest rated factors were the opportunity for study or growth, interest in religious or theological questions, and the desire to make a difference. Thus, ESQ responses regarding the relative importance of factors associated with a decision to begin theological study have been stable over time.

Students eventually enroll at a specific seminary. The ESQ asks students to indicate the top five reasons for choosing a particular institution. Table 6 reports fall 2004 and fall 2007 results. The table is sorted by descending frequency for the fall 2007 results. In both years, students reported that a school's theological perspective, academic reputation, and faculty were important reasons for selecting a particular school, surpassing the school's denominational relationship. Respondents also rated a school's spiritual atmosphere as an important factor in choosing a school. This item was selected by 7.8 percent in 2004 and 7.5 percent in 2007. By contrast, the least common reasons listed for choosing a particular school were having a friend on campus, access to other theological schools, the availability of housing, and interdisciplinary or joint programs (no more than 1.6 percent of responses).

Table 6

Top Five Reasons for Choosing a Particular Institution

Top Reasons for Choice	Fall 2004		Fall 2007	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Theological perspective	3,793	11.2	3,322	11.9
Academic reputation	3,912	11.5	3,227	11.5
Faculty	2,717	8.0	2,341	8.4
Spiritual atmosphere	2,648	7.8	2,102	7.5
Denominational affiliation	2,779	8.2	2,041	7.3
Curriculum	2,302	6.8	1,955	7.0
Location	2,131	6.3	1,802	6.4
Close to home	2,279	6.7	1,755	6.3
Sense of community	2,112	6.2	1,733	6.2
Financial aid assistance	1,787	5.3	1,532	5.5
Flexible class schedule	1,219	3.6	1,193	4.3
Special academic program	1,117	3.3	930	3.3
Ecumenical setting	889	2.6	710	2.5
Family/spouse	693	2.0	622	2.2
Multi-ethnic student body	909	2.7	598	2.1
University setting	703	2.1	564	2.0
Interdisciplinary/joint degree program	478	1.4	428	1.5
Availability of housing	543	1.6	409	1.5
Access to other theological schools	489	1.4	381	1.4
Friend on campus	414	1.2	330	1.2
Total	33,914	100.0	27,975	100.0

Source: Association of Theological Schools (2005, Table 21; 2008, Table 21).

Lonsway (2001) found that during the period 1996-2001, entering students consistently ranked a school's academic reputation first and its theological orientation second. In 2007 this order was reversed (theological orientation, 11.9 percent; academic reputation 11.5 percent).

The data collected by the ESQ are consistent with Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler's (1997) conclusion that students enter seminary with pre-existing theological commitments. They seek out specific schools that they suppose will share their

theological perspective, will provide a spiritual atmosphere conducive to discerning God's will for them (vocational discernment), and whose curriculum will enable them to engage substantive theological questions. The ESQ asks students about the path that brought them to a specific seminary. A second ATS instrument, the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) asks retrospective questions about their theological education. The next section briefly summarizes the range of questions that the GSQ asks of seminary graduates about their experience.

Graduating Student Questionnaire

The Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) was first used in its current form during the 1996-1997 academic year (Lonsway, 2002). The GSQ asks graduating students questions about their sources of income during seminary, their personal growth, level of satisfaction with skills related to future employment, the value of field education and other academic resources, and future plans for ministry. In addition, the GSQ asks students to state their age, gender, ethnicity, and level of debt. The results are reported in 22 data tables. One hundred twenty-eight schools administered the GSQ to 5,052 graduates at the close of the 2006-2007 academic year (Association of Theological Schools, 2007b). This section reports on the most important influences on the educational experience of students, the effects of field education, and student debt.

Influences on the educational experience. Table 7 reports the three most important influences on the educational experience of 2004 and 2007 M.Div. graduates. By far, respondents in both years chose faculty as the most important influence. Faculty was chosen by more than 20 percent in both years. The next highest ranked influence was chosen by approximately half as many graduating students. Respondents also rated

engagement with specific academic disciplines highly (Biblical studies, history, and theology). In both years, graduates reported that interaction with peers was important (8.8 percent or more for women and men). Field education (observing and working in congregations or other ministry settings) was also important. Female graduates chose this item at a rate slightly higher than male graduates (11.6 percent versus 8.0 percent in 2004; 10.8 percent versus 7.8 percent in 2007).

Table 7

Three Most Important Influences on Educational Experience, M.Div. Graduates

Influence	2004 Graduates		2007 Graduates	
	Male (percent)	Female (percent)	Male (percent)	Female (percent)
Faculty	21.1	20.4	22.0	20.5
Interaction with fellow students	8.8	8.8	11.0	10.8
Field education/internship	8.0	11.6	7.8	10.8
Biblical studies	11.0	9.4	10.6	8.4
Study of History and Theology	9.8	6.3	9.0	6.8
Experiences in ministry	8.4	7.6	7.2	6.9
Personal life experiences	6.5	7.3	6.1	7.5
Classroom discussion	5.2	4.9	5.3	5.1
Spiritual formation	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.7
Required reading	4.4	3.8	4.3	3.8
Differences in perspective	3.4	4.1	3.2	4.0
Multi-ethnic/cultural contacts	2.3	3.1	2.4	3.0
Community life of school	2.2	2.7	2.6	2.9
Worship/liturgy	2.8	3.8	2.3	3.1
Ecumenical interaction	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.8
Other	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.8

Source: Association of Theological Schools (2004, Table 15; 2007b, Table 15).

By contrast, the five options receiving fewest responses were ecumenical interaction, worship/liturgy, multi-ethnic/cultural contacts, the community life of the school, and differences in perspective (all rated at 3.8 percent or less). Required reading

and classroom discussion, both structured parts of the enacted curriculum, were ranked in the middle of the list of options.

The effects and importance of field education. The GSQ asks respondents to indicate the top two effects of field education or internship, if field work is required in the degree program. Table 8 summarizes the results for 2004 and 2007 M.Div. graduates. In both years, the highest scoring effect of field education was the provision of increased awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses. The second highest scoring effect was improved pastoral skills. Female graduates chose greater vocational clarity at a rate higher than male graduates (17.7 percent versus 13.7 percent in 2004; 19.0 percent versus 14.1 percent in 2007). In both years, the most infrequently chosen response by both women and men was greater interest in future ministry (selected by no more than 7.2 percent). Lonsway (2002) found that, from 1997-2001, the highest ranked effect of field work was improved pastoral skills, followed by achievement of a better idea of one's strengths and weaknesses. Greater self-confidence was ranked third. In the 2004 and 2007 results, the third most commonly identified effect of field education was vocational clarity.

Graduates were also asked about how important field education or internships (if required) were in their educational experience. Table 9 summarizes the results for 2004 and 2007 graduates who earned the M.Div. or a professional master's degree. For both 2004 and 2007 graduates in both types of degree programs, the most common response was "very important" (more than 50 percent of the respondents in each type of degree

Table 8

Top Two Effects of Required Field Education/Internship, M.Div. Graduates

Effect	2004 Graduates				2007 Graduates			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Better idea of my strengths and weaknesses	696	23.2	439	22.9	750	23.7	401	21.8
Improved pastoral skills	649	21.7	379	19.7	774	24.5	369	20.0
Greater vocational clarity	412	13.7	340	17.7	444	14.1	350	19.0
More self-confidence	329	11.0	259	13.5	279	8.8	242	13.1
Greater sense of people's needs	395	13.2	176	9.2	415	13.1	187	10.2
Greater self-understanding	300	10.0	198	10.3	297	9.4	188	10.2
Greater interest in future ministry	216	7.2	130	6.8	199	6.3	104	5.6
Total	2,997	100.0	1,921	100.0	3,158	100.0	1,841	100.0

Source: Association of Theological Schools (2004, Table 17; 2007b, Table 17).

Table 9

Importance of Field Education/Internship if Required (By degree program)

	2004 M.Div.		2004 Professional Master's		2007 M.Div.		2007 Professional Master's	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Of no importance	51	2.0	16	2.8	42	1.6	6	1.3
Of little importance	160	6.2	30	5.3	124	4.7	14	2.9
Somewhat important	354	13.8	63	11.0	345	13.1	53	11.0
Important	651	25.3	146	25.6	750	28.6	103	21.5
Very important	1,354	52.7	316	55.3	1,363	51.9	304	63.3
Total	2,570	100.0	571	100.0	2,624	100.0	480	100.0

Source: Association of Theological Schools (2004, Table 16; 2007b, Table 16).

program). The second most common response was "important" (more than 21 percent of respondents in each type of degree program). These respondents perceived field education as a significant part of their theological education.

Student Debt

The GSQ asks students about their level of debt. Student debt has long been a concern for observers of theological education (Ruger, Miller, & Early, 2005; Ruger & Wheeler, 1995) because the median salary of clergy is relatively low. Table 10 summarizes the responses from 2007 graduates. These data indicate that slightly more than 40 percent of M.Div. graduates and almost one-third of graduates earning a professional master's degree incurred no debt during their attendance at seminary. Fully half of M.Div. graduates had no debt or a debt of less than $10,000. Forty-two percent of those with a professional master's degree had incurred debt of $10,000 or less. At the same time, more than 15 percent of M.Div. graduates and almost 11 percent of professional master's graduates had incurred a debt of at least $40,000. Three years previously, in 2004, 61.3 percent of graduates with an M.Div. or professional master's reported that they had incurred educational debt of $10,000 or less. Thirty-one and a half percent had incurred educational debt of at least $15,000 (Association of Theological Schools, 2004, Table 8).

Ruger, Miller, and Early (2005) discovered that the mean amount borrowed by M.Div. students doubled from 1991 to 2001, rising to $15,559. According to National Postsecondary Student Aid Study data, the average total amount borrowed by all first-

Table 10

Educational Debt Incurred at Seminary

	Master of Divinity		Professional Master's degree	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
None	977	40.6	138	31.4
Less than $10,000	259	10.8	48	10.9
$10,000 to $19,999	324	13.4	94	21.4
$20,000 to $29,999	262	10.9	64	14.6
$30,000 to $39,999	210	8.7	47	10.7
More than $40,000	377	15.6	48	10.9
Total	2,409		439	

Source: Association of Theological Schools (2007b, Table 8).

professional students in 2003-2004 was $26,400. Compared with other students engaged in first-professional degrees (including JD, MD, and other health science master's degrees), fewer of those pursuing professional theological degrees took out loans and the average amount borrowed was less (Choy, Cataldi, & Griffith, 2006, p. 12).

Summary and Critique of ATS Data

The data collected in the ESQ provide insight into the factors that students consider when deciding to attend seminary. Responses to the GSQ document student perceptions of the enacted seminary curriculum and shed light on the value of programmed and spontaneous activities. These instruments have two profound limitations. First, ATS aggregates these data by degree program and gender. However, these data are not routinely aggregated by age of the respondent. Thus, standard reports do not suggest how the perceptions of older and younger students (first- and second-career) might differ.

Second, ATS survey instruments ask respondents to choose from a set menu of options and frequently require selection of some factors as the most important or influential. Such instruments do not ask about relationships between options. In Table 7, for instance, students reported that interaction with fellow students was an important educational influence, second only to faculty. Respondents ranked classroom discussion, community life of the school, and differences in perspective much lower. Presumably, these elements are also "interaction" with one's peers in some sense. Analysts thus do not know what respondents had in mind when they chose interaction with fellow students as an important influence. According to ESQ results reported in Table 6, students beginning seminary education often chose a particular school because of its spiritual atmosphere. Yet, graduating students reported worship/liturgy and the community life of their school as relatively uninfluential in their educational experience (Table 7). Such results need further probing to get at meanings.

In short, a simple ranking of elements in order of perceived importance sheds no light on the possible inter-relationships between elements of a student's theological education. This study using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) investigated both elements of student experience and the relationships that students perceive between those elements, creating new knowledge about the seminary experience.

First- and Second-Career Students in Other Helping Professions

The previous section of this chapter reviewed literature about seminarians in Canada and the United States, focusing on studies of first- and second-career students.

Before introducing the conceptual frameworks that guided the study, this section briefly reviews literature about first- and second-career students in professions similar to Christian ministry. Following the suggestion of Wheeler, Miller, and Aleshire (2007) that ministry is similar to other helping professions, this section points to representative literature about first- and second-career students in two such professions, social work and nursing. The section concludes by linking research about students in social work and nursing to this study of seminarians.

First- and Second-Career Students in Social Work Schools

This section introduces literature about social work students in Canada and the United States, then reviews quantitative studies that take into account age as a variable of interest. After reporting on qualitative studies about the socialization of social work students, the section ends with a critique of the literature.

Introduction

Social work has long been associated with the desire to do good, both for society and individuals (Ehrenreich, 1985). Social work shares, along with counseling and ministry, expectations for supervised practice in clinical or field settings (Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003). In Canada and the United States, social workers are trained through baccalaureate (BSW), master's (MSW) and doctoral (Ph.D. or DSW) education (Edwards, Shera, Reid, & York, 2006). Because of the profession's association with altruism (Forte, 1997), one research focus for social work education is the motivations leading students to choose the field (Christie & Kruk, 1998; Csikai & Rozensky,1997; Hanson & McCullagh, 1995). A large literature explores the attitudes of social work students towards various populations with which they work (Ben-Ari,1998; Kane, 2007;

Lemieux & Schroeder, 2004; Sun, 2002; Swank & Ratz, 2007; Youdin & Cleaveland, 2006) and examines student perceptions of social work education (Bennett, BrintzenhofeSzoc, Mohr, & Saks, 2008; Clements, 2008; Fortune, Cavazos, & Lee, 2005; Knight, 1996). However, relatively few studies address the age of students as a variable of interest or attend to the lived experience of social work students.

Multiple-Role and Older Social Work Students

Building on Apps' (1988) distinction between single-role students and those with multiple roles as workers, students, and caregivers, Home (1997) studied women engaged in social work, nursing, and adult education programs in Canadian universities. Three-fourths of her sample were students over age 35 living with a partner and children. Approximately two-thirds cared for children under age 13. She found that mothers of children under age 13 reported increased role strain, in line with previous research findings (Home, 1993). Social work students reported that the demands of being a student were more intense than students in nursing and adult education. A second study explicitly addressing older social work students addressed field education. Hopkins, Bloom, and Deal (2005) studied student satisfaction with field work, focusing on three sub-groups of students: older, part-time, and field employment-based. Researchers chose these nontraditional sub-groups "to begin to understand their unique characteristics and learning needs" (p. 574). Based on an MANOVA analysis and a self-administered questionnaire, Hopkins, Bloom, and Deal found that neither the age of the student nor a combination of age and employment status were statistically significant. However, these nontraditional students were more satisfied with their field work than traditional (younger, full-time) students. The researchers concluded that "potential applicants who

may be ready to return to school after working or raising a family, or considering how to balance work and school can be reassured that the strengths they bring to their educational experiences are valuable" (p. 583).

Qualitative Studies of Socialization

In a recent literature review on the professional socialization of social work students, Barretti (2004) noted a reliance on quantitative approaches that simplified socialization by focusing on single factors. She also pointed to four qualitative studies (Barbour, 1985; Loseke & Cahill, 1986; Schreiber, 1989; Shey, 1969) that got at "unofficial aspects of social work education" (p. 275). Schreiber's study, for instance, following students in their first year of graduate study found that informal peer groups both reinforced the academic objectives of the curriculum and reduced student stress. Barretta argued for more studies that attend to the particularities of lived experience, acknowledging that "students may undergo a relatively uniform training module, but they will negotiate their experiences through the lens of their own needs, experiences, lives, and self-concepts" (p. 278).

Critique

Few studies of social work students explicitly address age as a variable, although some studies acknowledge the presence of nontraditional students who may engage in social work education on a part-time basis or who shoulder responsibility for parenting young children. Most studies of social work students have employed quantitative methods which do not attend to the life worlds and lived experience of study participants. Qualitative approaches to the study of first- and second-career students have potential for testing Hopkins, Bloom, and Deal's (2005) suggestion that students whose life

experiences require them to engage "multiple systems as employees or parents" (p. 583) may acquire skills in self-advocacy and achieve satisfying experiences in field work.

First- and Second-Career Students in Nursing Schools

Nursing is another helping profession often compared to ministry because of its service orientation (Barretti, 2004; Wheeler, Miller, & Aleshire, 2007). This section introduces published literature about nursing students, then reviews studies that take into account age as a variable of interest. The section ends with a critique of extant research.

Introduction

Like preparation for ministry in North America, training for nurses moved from an apprenticeship model to a professional schooling model in the Twentieth Century (D'Antonio, 2007; Miller, 2007). Over time, hospital-based diploma training programs gave way to baccalaureate and master's-level programs in colleges and universities, beginning with the Yale School of Nursing in 1924 (Kalisch & Kalisch, 2004). As the practice of medicine changed in the Twentieth Century, nurses fulfilled a broader variety of roles. New programs began for higher level training, such as the Doctorate in Nursing Practice (Bartels, 2007). In many institutions, feminism revolutionized the nursing curriculum beginning in the 1980s (Malka, 2007). Currently, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accredits more than 600 nursing degree programs in the United States (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, 2009). Because of a global shortage of nurses, governments in many countries are attempting to recruit older persons into the field (Buchan & Aiken, 2008; Goodin, 2003).

The literature about nursing students includes studies of student attitudes about various diseases and classes of patients (Durkin, 2004; Denny-Smith, Bairan, & Page,

2006; Shoemake, Bowman, & Lester, 1998; Suikkala & Leino-Kilpi, 2001; Välimäki, Suominen, Peate, & Välimaki, 1998), research on the reasons that students choose the field (O'Brien, Mooney, & Glacken, 2008; Siler, DeBasio, & Roberts, 2008; Staiger, Auerbach, & Buerhaus, 2000), and investigations of self-efficacy as students learn new skills (Spence Laschinger, 1996; Liu, Mao, & Barnes-Willis, 2008; Ziccardi, Sedlak, & Doheny, 2004). Nursing has traditionally been a female-dominated profession. Many research studies about nursing students or teaching nursing students engage theoretical literature about gender as a construct (Keddy, 1995; Mackenzie, 1997; Wilding, 2008).

Role Stress

A continued focus in research on nursing students is role stress, the tension caused by nursing students who combine maternal and student roles (Gerson, 1985; Gigliotti, 1999; Gigliotti, 2007; Rifenbary, 1995). For instance, Gigliotti (2004) explored how social support impacted married undergraduate women who were nursing majors at 11 community colleges in New Jersey and New York. She compared younger (under 37 years of age) and older women (age 37 and older), specifically looking for age-related differences using an eight-item scale of perceived role stress and another questionnaire asking about social support. Based on independent sample *t* tests and MANOVA, she found no statistically significant age-related differences regarding the social support received by participants. However, older women reported lower role stress, perhaps because their children (who were, on average, older than the children of the younger participants) could communicate affection and serve "as more meaningful confidants" (p. 428).

Research on Older and Younger Nursing Students

Some research on nursing students has focused directly on age as a variable. Quantitative studies of students in Britain and the United States have found that older students perform better academically than younger students and are less likely to drop out of training programs (Hoskins, 1997; Houltram, 1996; Kevern, Ricketts, & Webb, 1997; Manifold & Rambur, 2001; Ofori, 2000). However, other research contradicts these findings (Allen, Higgs, & Holloway, 1988; Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999). Jeffreys (2004) thus cautions that "age is a complex variable" (p. 16) and that nursing students in older or younger categories should not be understood to be part of homogeneous groups.

Kevern and Webb (2004) conducted a qualitative study of mature nursing students, defined as age 26 and over. Using focus groups and a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), they sought to uncover the lived experiences of women students at one English institution of higher education. The researchers discovered three major themes. First, students did not know what to expect when they began their programs. Second, students were shocked by the level of the academic demands they experienced. Finally, students learned how to balance multiple responsibilities. They used friends and support systems to deal with inter-related worlds of academics, clinical setting, and family life. The results of this study were consistent with Home's (1993, 1997) research finding that friendships between women were highly valued by women returning to formal schooling.

Critique

Some studies of nursing students explicitly address age as a variable. Other studies acknowledge stress on students who have parenting responsibilities, providing

empirical support for Apps' (1988) distinction between single-role and multiple-role students. Most studies of nursing students that attend to age have employed quantitative methods. Because the majority of nursing students are women, the populations sampled in most studies have been comprised exclusively of women. Kevern and Webb's (2004) study of mature students explicitly attended to lived experience using focus groups and analysis of participant discourse, using Knodel's (1993) methods.

Relationship of Research on Social Work and Nursing Students to This Study

This major section concludes with comments on the relevance of research about social work and nursing students for the study of first- and second-career seminarians reported here.When compared to research studies about seminary students, the literature about social work students and nursing students is far larger and more sophisticated. There are no studies, for instance, about attrition or retention of students engaged in theological study, while such studies are common for social work and nursing students. Quantitative methods dominate the literature about social work and nursing students. Much published literature about seminary students uses qualitative methods. Many research reports about social work and nursing students focus on women, who historically have been the majority in both fields. By contrast, most Protestant seminary students are men.

In the research literature, there are relatively few studies that focus on the relative ages of students such as Hopkins, Bloom, and Deal's (2005) study of social work students and Gigliotti's (2004) study of nursing students. Even fewer studies (Barbour, 1985; Kevern & Webb, 2004; Loseke & Cahill, 1986; Mackenzie, 1997; Schreiber, 1989;

Shey, 1969) use qualitative methods that address lived experience. No study of either social work or nursing students employed IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) as its methodology. The paucity of qualitative research suggests that the study reported here may add to increased understanding of the lived experience of younger and older students training for helping professions that are similar to the Christian ministry.

Conceptual Frameworks for the Study

The bulk of this chapter reviewed the literature relevant to studying first- and second-career seminarians. The chapter concludes by describing two conceptual frameworks that informed the research reported here. First, a life-course or life-span framework situates the seminary experience of students within the broader field of social influences operating through time. Second, the Terenzini and Reason (2005) model of the undergraduate college experience focuses on how a school's organizational context and interaction with peers affect students. Integrating these two models with the research literature on theological education, this chapter proposes a new model for understanding students in seminary.

Life-Course/Life-Span Framework and Ecological Theory

The Individual Through Time

A life-course or life-span framework (Heinz & Marshall, 2003; Hunt, 2005; Santrock, 2006) tracks an individual throughout his or her life cycle. Such a framework helps to situate vocational decisions and decisions to "go back to school." In a life-course or life-span framework, an individual is understood to live within a social and economic framework. These factors provide assets that an individual may use, establish

constraints, and create norms (Elder, 1981; Hareven, 1978). In Vinovskis' (1999) version of a life-course framework, an individual lives in a social web determined by immediate factors such as family, one's local school, and work. However, the individual is also shaped by more distant factors such as government activity. Table 11 summarizes the

Table 11

Outside Influences and the Life-Course

Local School	Family	Other Influences	Work
Teachers	Parental resources	Peers	Nature of job
Curriculum	Parental involvement	Media	On-the-job training
Classrooms	Parental characteristics	Social services	
Special programs	New family responsibilities	After-school activities	
School environment		Summer learning	
School leadership		Public libraries	
School libraries		Neighborhood	
Social services			
Assessments			

Source: Vinovskis (1999, pp. 210-212).

outside influences upon the individual. Vinovskis' immediate purpose in creating the grid was to assist educational researchers so that studies would include the entire span of an individual's life cycle and be broad enough to explore all influences on an individual's development.

Bronfenbrenner: Ecological Theory

The ecological life-span theory of Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 2005) outlines a system of an individual's development throughout life emphasizing the social environments that shape persons. Drawing on Lewin's (1951) field theory, Bronfenbrenner envisions five systems that surround individuals. An individual's

immediate environment is a set of *microsystems* such as family, peers, and church groups. Microsystems interact to form an individual's *mesosystem*, "the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Thus, a mesosystem is a way of conceiving the interactions that take place in the life of a child, who relates simultaneously to members of her immediate family, a group of peers at school, and other persons in her neighborhood. Adults may live in a mesosystem containing such microsystems as the workplace, volunteer organizations, and the home. The analytic point is that these microsystems exert various kinds of influence upon an individual, and the interactions need to be given serious attention.

The third level of analysis is the *exosystem*. The social structures in the exosystem influence an individual but are not part of her immediate context. Examples of structures in the exosystem include government agencies, economic mechanisms, and transportation systems. Bronfenbrenner's fourth level of analysis is the *macrosystem*. Macrosystems are cultural prototypes, or blueprints. They are "the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture" (1977, p. 515) that convey information, custom, and ideology. The final level of analysis takes into account the ebb and flow of time. Attention to *chronosystems* highlight the "the impact of prior life events and experiences, singly or sequentially, on subsequent development" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 83). For example, the death of a parent may profoundly affect a child for the rest of her life. The decision of a person in her 30s to return to school also may have lasting impact on her life course.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979, 2005) ecological theory has influenced such research areas as urban planning (Churchman & Ginosar, 1999), the impact of parents on

the educational attainment of children (Seginer, 2006), and the relationship between work and family (Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). As a psychologist, Bronfenbrenner appealed to fellow psychologist Lewin (1951) as an earlier advocate for his ideas about the importance of the social environment, broadly construed, on individual development. Conceptually, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is another version of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Ecological theory is helpful in the context of this study about first- and second-career seminarians in several respects. The theory takes time seriously (chronosystems), recognizes the interactions between settings (microsystems produce mesosystems; lurking macrosystems and exosystems influence all things indirectly), and acknowledges that individuals undergo countless transitions of role, setting, and place in their lives. Ecological theory is pertinent to this study because the research compares the conceptual worlds of relatively younger and relatively older seminary students. Ecological theory honors the multiple ways in which individuals live their lives and suggests that students come to seminary through a variety of life experiences. In phenomenological terms, Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979, 2005) ecological theory provides a helpful tool for charting how the life world of a given individual develops and changes over time.

The Undergraduate Experience

A second conceptual framework that undergirds this study is Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of the undergraduate experience. In response to the need to better understand how students make the transition to the first year of college, Terenzini and Reason produced a representation of a student's college experience as a three-stage schema. The schema builds on theoretical work in sociology and social psychology

(Astin, 1983, 1993; Pascarella, 1985; Tinto, 1973, 1995) and Berger and Milem's (2000) model of how organizations influence students. Figure 1 depicts the main elements of their model. To understand the college experience, the analyst begins with a student's pre-college experiences and characteristics. Each college student has a particular academic preparation, comes from a distinctive social class background, and is shaped by his or her gender identity and life experiences. Each student, then, enters college with a particular set of characteristics and experiences. As a group, students are variegated rather than homogenous. The model makes provision for the distinctive life histories of students, in keeping with life-course theory.

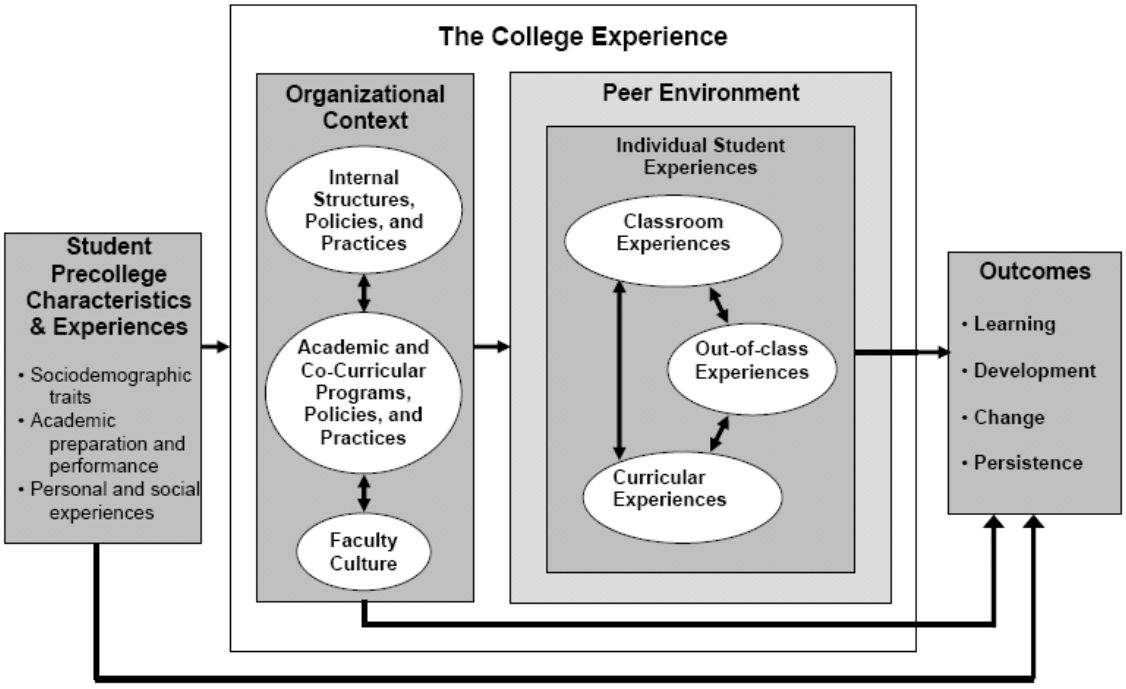

Figure 1

The Undergraduate College Experience
Source: Terenzini & Reason (2005, p. 21).

The student then enters the college experience proper, which is shaped by the peer environment (e.g., out-of-class experiences) and organizational context, containing such elements as academic programs and distinctive faculty culture. While in college, each student has her or his own experience, which is a complex function of who that student was before entering college and what happened, whether intentionally or serendipitously, during college. Positive outcomes of the college experience are learning and persistence to degree completion.

Terenzini and Reason (2005) are especially concerned in helping educators facilitate the transition that students face upon entering college, a time of leaving behind one set of social expectations and engaging the new role of college student. They also emphasize factors over which faculty members and administrators have formal authority. Terenzini and Reason's model is applicable to other forms of higher education beyond the undergraduate level. The model identifies elements of student experience, such as faculty culture and the enacted curriculum, that are common to undergraduate, professional, and graduate education (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Birnbaum, 1988; Lovitts, 2001).

Students in Seminary: A Proposed Model

Building on Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979, 2005) ecological theory, Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of the undergraduate experience, Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler's (1997) discovery of the importance of a dominant message in the seminary experience, and the literature about North American seminarians summarized in this chapter, the author proposes a model for the students in seminary, depicted in Table 12.

Table 12

Students in Seminary

Pre-seminary Characteristics & Life-Course →	Seminary Environment →	Peer Environment → Individual Student Experiences	Characteristics of Graduates
Sociodemographic traits	Structures & policies	Following rules	
Academic preparation	Faculty culture		
Theological commitments ● church influences ● sense of call	Dominant message	Responding to dominant message ● exposure ● experimentation ● resistance	Personal appropriation of dominant message
Personal experiences (in microsystems) Social experiences Job experience	Intended & enacted curriculum ● faculty as teachers & mentors ● field work ● spiritual formation ● worship	Experienced curriculum ● reading & reflection ● ministry experiences ● classroom experiences ● relationships with other students ● relationships with faculty	Socialization as a minister ● theological knowledge ● ministerial skills ● pastoral attitudes ● Christian practices
		Family & work	Family relationships

Derived principally from Bronfenbrenner (1979), Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997), and Terenzini and Reason (2005).

In the model, students begin their theological education already shaped by their life-histories. Each student has been influenced by distant economic, social, and governmental factors as well as more proximate institutions such as family, church, and school. Based on the literature reviewed here, it is plausible to suggest that students have existing theological commitments and, often, a sense that God has called them to ministry. The seminary experience proper is conceptually divided into the seminary and peer environments. A particular seminary has its own distinctive culture and dominant message. The school's intended and enacted curricula, policies, and structures shape students. At the same time, students are affected by their relationships with students, field education experiences, reading, and classroom experiences. They continue to have relationships with their families and may simultaneously be students, field interns, spouses, and parents. By the time that students graduate, they have been socialized as ministers with new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They have wrestled with their school's dominant message and melded it with their pre-existing theological viewpoints and life-histories.

The model highlights many elements in the process of theological education as described in the published literature. Simply attending to the formal, intended, and enacted curricula captures only part of the intricacies of the seminary experience. The model does not, however, suggest the relative weight of the various elements that make up a student's seminary experience, nor does it suggest how first-career students and second-career students might distinctly navigate their way through their seminary careers, nor how they think about the linkages between these elements and thus socially construct their seminary reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Goodman, 1978). In short, the

question of the relationships between elements is an *empirical question* that interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) can fruitfully explore.

Chapter Two: Summary

This section summarizes chapter two. Relatively little research addresses the lived experience of theological students in the United States from the point of view of the students themselves. The existing literature discusses the intended and enacted curricula of theological schools but says little about the experience of second-career students, despite the fact that they comprise a majority of students now enrolled in theological schools. ATS survey instruments collect data on the seminary experience. However, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of these data because the surveys ask closed-ended questions with limited options for response. Standard reports do not aggregate results by age, further masking differences or similarities between first- and second-career seminarians.

Some research about students in social work and nursing attends to age as a variable of interest. This literature notes that many older women experience stress as they simultaneously enact the roles of student and parent. Some studies using qualitative methods (e.g., Kevern & Webb, 2004) provide insight into the lived experience of students.

An adequate model of students in seminary requires attention to the life-course or life-span of students. Moreover, a helpful model needs to take into account the intended and enacted curriculum, a school's dominant message, and its distinctive organizational culture. Such a model also requires consideration of student experiences in field work,

relationships with peers, and family members. The question of the relationships between the elements comprising a student's seminary experience is an empirical question that interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) can effectively investigate.

Chapter Three: Method

This chapter details the method used in this study of the experience of first- and second-career seminarians at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). The chapter begins with a restatement of the problem statement and research questions that drive the study. After a discussion of phenomenology as the underlying theoretical orientation for the research, the chapter describes the research design employed for selecting NCTS and for inviting first- and second-career students enrolled there to take part in the study. The chapter justifies interactive qualitative analysis, or IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), as a method of choice and details how IQA provided guidance to identify preliminary themes of the seminary experience, to construct interview protocols, and, most importantly, to synthesize the themes articulated by participants into conceptual systems, or mindmaps.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The majority of students entering seminaries in the first decade of the Twenty-First Century in North America do so with work experience in some field. Theological educators recognize that the life experience of a single 22-year-old fresh out of college is different from the life experience of a married 35-year-old (who may also be a parent) that enrolls at the same seminary (Forsberg & Mudge, 1991). However, relatively few studies have taken seriously the breadth in ages represented in the student population of graduate theological schools. The studies focusing on second-career seminarians that have been published, as chapter two of this study documents, focus on motivation to attend seminary (Jones, 1996), learning styles (Reistroffer, 1997), and leadership practices (Hillman, 2004). Such research does little to shed light on what the seminary

experience means to students themselves, whether students are in seminary during their odyssey years or are older.

This study explores the seminary experience of first-career and second-career theological students in one free-standing Protestant seminary using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Specifically, this study investigates four research questions:

1. What themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?
2. How do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?
3. How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?
4. Do first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?

Theoretical Orientation: Phenomenology

This study uses phenomenology as its theoretical orientation. Phenomenology undergirds the epistemological orientation of the study and informs many of the specific procedures of IQA. Although Northcutt and McCoy (2004) say little about the theoretical pedigree of IQA, its commitments are consistent with the approach used by Schutz (1932/1967, 1970) and those influenced by him (Berger & Luckman, 1967). This section briefly describes phenomenology as used in the social sciences and argues that IQA procedures are fundamentally rooted in phenomenology.

Phenomenology and the Social Construction of Reality

Phenomenology as Philosophy

Husserl (1954/1970; 1999) was the founder of phenomenology as a philosophical approach. For Husserl, who lived from 1859-1938, the only sure ground for knowledge was the mind. He developed phenomenology as a rigorous system of philosophical analysis which bracketed all sense data in order to concentrate on the surer ground of reality, the human mind. Husserl eventually attempted to tackle the vexing problem of how one mind (which was sure of its existence and competency to make judgments) could authentically communicate with another mind (equally sure of its competence, yet clearly not identical to the first mind). Husserl's solution was to posit *intersubjectivity*, the ability of one mind to have reliable communication and enduring relationships with another mind. For Husserl, then, two or more persons could genuinely share a common conceptual space of work, love, and meaning—in his terms, a *life world*—without nagging epistemological doubts that the sensations and experiences brought to the attention of one's mind were illusions.

Phenomenology as Social Science Orientation

Husserl's (1954/1970; 1999) notions of life worlds and intersubjectivity were important concepts for ensuing generations of sociologists (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Schutz, 1932/1967, 1970; Wuthnow, 2007) and other qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The concepts of life world and intersubjectivity joined into the notion that reality, as a shared life world between persons, is socially constructed. That is, intersubjective communication between persons creates a consensual understanding of how things actually are.

Implicit in the notion of the social construction of reality is the prospect that different groups of people construe experience quite differently from other groups. One group observes the fire, smoke, and ash emerging from a mountain top and interprets these portents as signs of the displeasure of their gods. Another group observes the same event and interprets it as a volcanic eruption, a recurring natural phenomenon. Berger and Luckman (1967) noted the stunning plasticity of human beings in social settings. What is considered normative and laudable in one society (e.g., polygamy as the usual arrangement for family life) is abhorrent in another. Societies are built as individuals interact with others to produce habits and institutions. Through families and other social structures, individuals acquire a sense of identity. Plausibility structures reinforce the notion that the world of our common experience is the objective world. Thus, reality is socially constructed by particular groups.

Phenomenology as Worldmaking

Goodman (1978) argued that the social construction of reality does not occur in isolation like chemical reagents reacting in a laboratory experiment. In practice, new worlds are created from existing worlds. Goodman argued that artists, physicists, and people in groups generally create distinctive worlds. In these worlds, there are rules for interpreting size, putting sounds together, what we mean by objects being at rest or in motion, measuring time, and many other aspects of a given world. Seemingly neutral concepts such as left and right may be charged with meaning (Needham, 1967). These rules and conceptual categories are often implicit, but inhabitants of a given world know about them and use them. Goodman contends that we are not in a position to test these multiple worlds against the real world that exists apart from the frames of reference that

are part of actual worlds. For instance, the explanation of a neuro-scientist for an individual's reaction to the performance of a Beethoven string quartet will be different from an individual music lover's own explanation. But there is no independent, correct framework for interpreting the experience of listening to music. A painting by Van Gogh depicts a world very different from Jackson Pollock or Diego Rivera, but there is no free-standing frame of reference for interpreting art. Without art critics there can be no interpretation.

Just as importantly, Goodman (1978) argued, Aristotle's explanation for what happens when a weight is dropped from the leaning Tower of Pisa would have been very different from the explanation proposed by Galileo and Newton. For Goodman, both the so-called natural and social sciences produce distinctive worlds, in part because of the frames of reference that they employ. But his point is not simply about how scientists intentionally approach research or how artists make a world of color or sound. The point is applicable broadly. All social groups create their own worlds. "Anthropology and developmental psychology . . . study social and individual histories of such worldmaking" (pp. 6-7). New worlds are occasionally made with great fanfare, such as a scientific paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962). More commonly, new worlds are made quietly as groups subtly adjust their ways of thinking in response to changes in life worlds.

Worldmaking, Interactive Qualitative Analysis, and the Researcher

The previous section discussed phenomenology as a philosophical position and the influence of phenomenology on the social sciences. This section describes the intellectual pedigree of interactive qualitative analysis, the method used in this study, as well as researcher positionality.

Explicit Intellectual Pedigree of IQA

Northcutt and McCoy (2004) briefly discuss the conceptual roots of IQA, the method underlying this study. They appeal to Husserl (1965), Merleau-Ponty (1967), and grounded theory approaches to research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They side with Merleau-Ponty in affirming that phenomenology in social science research rightly gives pride of place to "the nature of socially constructed meaning in its focus on *an inventory of consciousness*" (Northcutt & McCoy, p. 4). Thus, IQA is concerned with how individuals in discrete groups think about their life worlds.

Because of the phenomenological commitment to focus on the consciousness of the group that is participating in the research and not the researcher's own preliminary notions of what the results of research might be, the researcher using IQA works through cycles of reflection in order to establish the scope of the research problem. The researcher uses these recursive cycles to make the study manageable in practical terms and so that the researcher can pose an open-ended question to study participants. Open-ended questions are necessary to reveal more about the core thing, the phenomenon which interests the researcher. Most tellingly, Northcutt and McCoy (2004) insist that there is no inherent continuity between the results of previous empirical studies about a topic and a fresh turn to it via IQA. Indeed, IQA is useful because it explores a phenomenon with new eyes.

Because of this phenomenological commitment, the IQA approach privileges the participants in the study as the sole reliable human sources of data. The researcher uses fixed protocols that minimize the researcher's fingerprints and, just as importantly, her power, in data collection and analysis. IQA also follows set procedures for establishing

relationships between the themes identified by participants in order to minimize the researcher's ability to misinterpret the life world of those being studied. In short, IQA is consistent with the phenomenological approach in the social sciences flowing from Schutz's (1970) and Berger and Luckmann's (1967) concern with the social construction of reality and Goodman's (1978) concern for how individuals and groups classify and organize reality into worlds.

Researcher Positionality

A phenomenological orientation sets up precise constraints on the role of the researcher. In this study, the researcher exercised independence and power most clearly in three parts of the research. First, the researcher selected the phenomenon to be studied, the experience of first- and second-career seminarians. Second, the researcher analyzed the themes or affinities articulated by participants. Finally, the researcher's distinctive interpretation came to the fore in the end of the study, as the researcher drew implications from the results for educational practice and further research.

As detailed later in this chapter, IQA protocols determine how the researcher builds the conceptual systems, or mindmaps, articulated by respondents. In principle, any researcher using the same data will come to the same conclusions about relationships between affinities and produce functionally equivalent mindmaps for each constituency studied. Thus, in an IQA approach, the researcher's primary task is to let informants speak in their own words about important themes and the relationships between those themes. The researcher expresses curiosity and empathy during interviews, but does not seek to become an active participant in the life world under examination. The researcher's positionality is engaged interest. Any commitment to advocacy that the

researcher holds is masked from informants during the data collection process (interviewing), but expresses itself in how the researcher draws conclusions from the data provided by study participants and in the researcher's assertions about strategies for improving educational practice.

Studying Conceptual Worlds of Seminarians: Participants and Method

This section describes the selection of participants for this study of conceptual worlds of seminary students. It also provides a justification for the use of interactive qualitative analysis as the method for this study.

Site and Participants

Because of the researcher's interest in the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career theological students, the research design first identified a single seminary as the site for the study. Conducting research at one seminary enabled exploration of a bounded social world with its own microculture. The researcher secured permission from the seminary's president to conduct group and individual interviews of students. The researcher selected the specific school, given the research pseudonym New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS), for four reasons. First, the seminary's student population consisted of a mix of first- and second-career students. Without a population of students in both demographic categories, the research questions could not have been addressed. Second, during the time of this research, NCTS had an M.Div. enrollment of approximately 130 students. The size of the M.Div. student population provided a pool of persons large enough to meet IQA standards for rigor. Interviewing only a few participants magnifies the impact of each individual's way of thinking on a mindmap.

Interviewing more respondents captures the breadth of variability within a constituency and diminishes the significance of any particular individual's opinions.

Third, the researcher conducted this study at NCTS because he could secure consent from the school's president to interview students there. Without the permission and active support of institutional leaders and informal gatekeepers, qualitative researchers are unable to investigate phenomena of interest because they do not have access to informants (Mertens, 2005). Fourth, at the time of this study, the student enrollment in the M.Div. program at NCTS was approximately 50 percent women and 50 percent men. Although gender per se was not a focus of this study, the extant literature on gender in theological education (Charlton, 1987; Fitchett, Stairs, & Turner, 2001) suggests that the life worlds of women and men at the same seminary may be distinctive. The researcher sought to interview a sample of students in each constituency that mirrored NCTS's gender diversity.

Justification for Using IQA

The justification for using IQA in this study of the conceptual worlds of first-and second-career theological students is two-fold. First, the existing research about the seminary experience of students has not systematically studied the lived experience of students and mapped the results in ways that allow researchers to disentangle experiences of younger and older students. IQA begins with the requirement to identify pertinent research subjects and their relationship to the phenomenon of interest. The IQA concept of constituencies is somewhat analogous to the stratified sampling techniques in quantitative research designs. Northcutt and McCoy (2004) specify that individuals who are similarly situated to the phenomenon in terms of power and distance form a distinct

constituency. Members of a constituency, a term intentionally drawn from political science, are similar to one another in ways that matter to the researcher. The expectation is not that all members of a constituency will speak with one voice about their experience, but that they "share a common perspective" (p. 47) because of their relationship to the phenomenon of interest. For instance, a researcher studying infantry warfare might identify front-line troops and headquarters staff as distinct constituencies. In the research undertaken here, the key characteristics that members of a constituency had in common were engagement in M.Div. theological education at the same seminary and the age attained prior to their enrollment there. Thus, IQA provides a technique with a plausible chance of unearthing new information about lived experience of first-career and second-career seminarians because the researcher intentionally sought out participants who were members of constituencies of interest to the researcher.

The second reason for using IQA is that, as discussed earlier in this chapter, IQA privileges the lived experience of study participants and is curious about their ways of making sense of reality. IQA procedures require the researcher to bridle her own opinions about the phenomenon being studied in order to listen to informants. IQA requires the researcher to gather opinions that may be at odds with her own viewpoint or contradict the findings of previous research. The IQA approach is suited to encouraging individuals to speak about their life worlds without flattening out the particularity of their experiences or seeking to make New Creation Theological Seminary stand as the exemplar of How All Seminaries Work. As detailed below, IQA required the researcher to adhere to standards in data collection, the creation of conceptual systems, and their interpretation. In short, IQA honors the messiness of human experience (Estler, 1990)

and clearly distinguishes the voices of informants from the interpretations of the researcher. The next section describes the sources of data for this study.

Sources of Data

The Site: New Creation Theological Seminary

To answer the research questions posed in this study, the researcher conducted group and individual interviews with students at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS), a free-standing Protestant seminary with a total headcount enrollment of more than 250 students in three degree programs. At the time of this study, the M.Div. enrollment was approximately 130 students. A seminary of this size falls into the mid-range of theological schools, as measured by enrollment (Association of Theological Schools, 2007a, Table 1.4A). In this study, all informants were students in the school's M.Div. program.

Research Questions and Sources of Data

Table 13 maps each of the four research questions of this study to a data source and pertinent IQA procedures. In the IQA approach, the researcher leads focus groups for the purpose of surfacing the key themes, or affinities, of the phenomenon under consideration (research question 1). The researcher then conducts individual interviews to learn more about the meaning of each theme (research question 1), and to understand how informants relate these themes into a system of thought (research question 2). The focus group and individual interview data supply protocol-driven analysis (the IRDs and SIDs, discussed below). The results of this analysis are mindmaps that the researcher then

Table 13

Research Questions and Sources of Data: The Seminary Experience

Research Question	Data Source	IQA Procedure
[1] What themes did first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?	Focus groups Individual interviews	Interviewing; Affinity Relationship Table (ART)
[2] How did first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?	Individual interviews	Affinity Relationships; Interrelationship Diagrams (IRD); System Influence Diagram (SID)
[3] How did the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?	Focus groups Individual interviews	Researcher analysis
[4] Did first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?	Individual interviews	Researcher analysis
(Verification of informant status as first-career versus second-career student)	Questionnaire	Constituency verification

compares (research questions 2 and 3). Individual interviews are also the data source for research question 4, the possible identification of an over-arching message at New Creation Theological Seminary. Previous ethnographic research on seminaries (Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, & Marler, 1997; Kleinmann, 1984) identified such a message at each school studied.

Table 14 describes the criteria that participants in the focus groups and individual interviews needed to meet to be eligible to be part of the study. Participants in the first-career seminarian focus group were required to be less than 30 years old when they enrolled in the M.Div. program at NCTS. They were required to have completed at least 30 credit hours (approximately one-third of the hours required to complete the degree) at

NCTS, and to have enrolled for at least nine hours (full-time engagement) for at least one semester at the school. Finally, it was desirable that eligible participants had taken part

Table 14

Eligibility Requirements for Participation in Study

Constituency	Age at Time of Enrollment at NCTS	Status to Degree Completion	Level of Engagement
First-career seminarian	Less than 30 years old	30 credit hours or more completed	●At least 30 credit hours completed at NCTS ●At least one semester of enrollment at 9 or more credit hours at NCTS ●Par in Ministry Practicum through NCTS (desirable)
Second-career seminarian	At least 30 years old	30 credit hours or more completed	●At least 30 credit hours completed at NCTS ●At least one semester of enrollment at 9 or more credit hours at NCTS ● Participation in Ministry Practicum through NCTS (desirable)

in Ministry Practicum, an experiential learning component of the M.Div. program. The researcher imposed these eligibility requirements in order to invite students who have experienced the culture of NCTS as full-time students for at least one semester and to create a working distinction between first-career students (those who are less than 30 years of age when they begin their theological education at NCTS) and second-career students. The researcher sought to interview informants who had taken part in Ministry Practicum because field education is an educationally important component of M.Div. training (Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2006).

Participants in the second-career seminarian focus group were required to be at least 30 years old when they enrolled in the M.Div. program at NCTS. Like members of

the first-career constituency, they were required to have completed at least 30 credit hours (approximately one-third of the hours required to complete the degree) at NCTS, and to have enrolled for at least nine hours (full-time engagement) for at least one semester. Finally, it was desirable that eligible participants had taken part in Ministry Practicum. The researcher imposed these eligibility requirements in order to invite students who have experienced the culture of NCTS as full-time students for at least one semester and to make an operational distinction between the two constituencies. As discussed in chapter two, the boundary line between first- and second-career theological students used in previous research has been age 30, although there is no compelling theoretical justification to set the age limit at this point.

Participants

A total of 17 participants, meeting the eligibility requirements described in the previous section, took part in focus groups conducted by the researcher. Conducting focus groups was the first phase of data collection, following IQA protocols (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Table 15 summarizes the age distribution of these participants. The median age of enrollment of first-career participants was 24. The mean age was 24.6. The median age of enrollment for second-career participants was 39. The mean age was 42.

In this study, the researcher conducted 17 individual in-depth interviews about themes of the seminary experience (axial interviews). These participants met the eligibility requirements described in the previous section. Table 16 summarizes the gender and age distribution of participants who took part in axial interviews.

Table 15

Age Distribution of Focus Group Participants, By Constituency (n = 17)

			Median Age at Enrollment	Mean Age at Enrollment
First-career				
22	24	27	24	24.6
23	24	29		
23	25			
Second-career				
33	39	45	39	42
38	39	47		
39	41	57		

Table 16

Gender and Age of Axial Interviewees, By Constituency (n=17)

	Gender	Median Age at Enrollment	Mean Age at Enrollment
First-career	4 women	24.5	24.75
	4 men	25.5	25
Second-career	5 women	39	42.4
	4 men	55	53

The median age at enrollment of the women in the first-career constituency was 24.5. The median age of enrollment for the men was 25.5. In the second-career constituency, the median age at enrollment was 39 for the women and 55 for the men. A total of 53 percent of those interviewed were women. Forty-seven percent were men

Table 17 summarizes the denominational affiliation of those interviewed. A total of nine individuals, or 53 percent, belonged to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Three individuals, or 18 percent, belonged to the United Methodist Church. Five interviewees, or 29 percent, belonged to other churches. Of those interviewed, 14 (82 percent)) identified themselves as white. One participant was a citizen of South Korea. One participant identified herself as multi-racial, and another as Korean American.

Table 17

Denominational Affiliation of Axial Interviewees, By Constituency (n=17)

	Affiliation
First-career	6 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
	1 Assemblies of God
	1 non-denominational
Second-career	3 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
	3 United Methodist Church
	1 American Baptist Church
	1 Presbyterian Church in Korea
	1 Missionary Baptist Church

Table 18

Selected Characteristics of Study Participants (Theoretical Codes), By Constituency (n=37)

Characteristic	Constituency	
	First-career	Second-career
Age at enrollment range	22 to 29	32 to 60
Median age at enrollment	24.5	42
Mean age at enrollment	24.9	45.7
Gender	9 women	10 women
	7 men	11 men
Denominational affiliation	13 PCUSA	9 PCUSA
	3 other churches	6 UMC
		6 other churches
Ethnicity	15 White	18 White
	1 Korean American	1 Korean
		1 Korean American
		1 multi-ethnic

A total of 37 study participants contributed information about the relationships between themes of the seminary experience (theoretical codes). These participants also met the eligibility requirements described in the previous section. Table 18 summarizes selected characteristics of these participants. The age of enrollment for first-career students ranged from 22 to 29. The age of enrollment for members of the second-career

constituency ranged from 30 to 60. A total of 19 women (51 percent) and 18 men (49 percent) contributed theoretical codes. Twenty-two of the participants (59 percent) were members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Fifteen (41 percent) belonged to other churches. A total of 33 participants (89 percent) identified as White.

According to enrollment data from NCTS, the fall 2008 distribution of men and women in the M.Div. program was 53 percent women and 47 percent men. The percentage of students affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was 57 percent. The percentage of M.Div. students identifying themselves as White was 81 percent. Thus, the distribution of interviewees closely mirrored the gender and denominational diversity present in the student body as well as meeting the eligibility criteria summarized in Table 14.

Data Collection at NCTS: From Focus Groups to Interview Protocol

This section describes the data collection processed that the researcher used, based on IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) protocols. The first step was the generation of key themes via focus groups. The second step was the refinement of themes or affinities. The third step was the creation of an individual interview protocol growing organically from the discovered themes.

Focus Groups

Northcutt and McCoy (2004) provide detailed procedures for the conduct of focus groups in an IQA study. Appendix A describes in detail how the researcher conducted one focus group of first-career seminarians and another of second-career seminarians at

the research site. The focus groups unearthed rough categories used by students to describe their life worlds.

Establishing Affinities

After conducting focus groups for each constituency, the researcher refined the emergent categories identified by participants into affinities. This section comments on the distinctive IQA definition of an affinity, then describes the process that the researcher used to take the tentative categories and definitions generated in the focus groups and refine them into a single set of 12 affinities for use in constructing an interview protocol. Appendix B describes in detail the procedures used to produce affinities from the first- and second-career focus groups.

Qualitative researchers typically analyze their data to discover themes. Themes are the creation of language. Informants may recite poems, talk about their individual experience, or gossip about others. Qualitative researchers analyze these verbal productions and discern themes that interest them because of existing theoretical reasons or that simply emerge from transcripts. In IQA, an *affinity* is a construct with several characteristics. It is not a specific place or thing. It is compact and homogenous so that it is distinct from other affinities. An affinity does not point to a putative relationship with any other affinity. Finally, an affinity contains within it a range of meanings, values, or timbre. "For example, rather than having two affinities such as *Positive Emotions* and *Negative Emotions*, one affinity *Emotions* suffices" (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 99).

Reconciling Affinities of First- and Second-Career Focus Groups

Following IQA procedures, it is desirable to reconcile the affinities produced by two focus groups dealing with the same phenomenon in order to produce one interview protocol for all individual interviews. Table 19 displays the results of this reconciliation for this study. Nine affinities from the first-career focus group combined with six affinities from the second-career focus group to produce a combined total of 11 affinities.

Table 19

Reconciled Affinities, First- and Second-Career Student Focus Groups

First-Career Affinity	Second-Career Affinity	Reconciled Affinity
Community	Community	Community
Emotions	Feelings	Emotions
Spirituality	Spiritual	Spirituality
Academic program	Effort	Academic program
Ministry		Ministry
Facilities		Facilities
Faculty and staff		Faculty and staff
Call to ministry		Call to ministry
Church requirements		Church requirements
	Life management	Life management
	Transformation	Transformation

In the case of the affinities Community, Emotions, and Spirituality, there was a high degree of agreement between the two groups about the content and scope of the affinity. For each group, Community described relationships (especially supportive relationships) between NCTS students. Similarly, what the second-career group called Feelings was virtually identical with what the first-career group named as Emotions, once the full spectrum of positive and negative emotions was accounted for. Spiritual and Spirituality also pointed to the same concept, the quest for the presence of God.

Upon inspection, the affinity that the second-career focus group called Effort was very close in meaning to the first-career's affinity Academic Program. Effort described how focus group participants reacted to the academic program and changes (mental and physical) that resulted from engaging the academic program. Only the second-career group produced the affinity Transformation. However, as Table B13 (in Appendix B) documents, several cards that the first-career group categorized under Emotions (such as growth, risk, transformative) fit well under the concept Transformation.

There were seven affinities that were distinctive to one focus group or the other. Only the second-career group identified an affinity Life Management to describe aspects of their lives not directly related to seminary. Only the first-career group identified Ministry, Facilities, Faculty and Staff Impact, Academic Program, Call to Ministry, and Church Requirements. Whatever the underlying reason, the first-career focus group generated more affinities than the second-career group (nine versus six).

Comparison of Reconciled Affinities with The Graduate Experience

The researcher then compared these affinities with a study by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) of the experience of graduate students at a university. Table 20 compares these affinities with the results of the NCTS focus groups. Some affinities clearly point to the same concept. For instance, community and relationships point to the same idea, relationships of various kinds between students. In both studies, participants identified an affinity about transformation. NCTS students did not speak of an affinity called Reward/Purpose, but instead identified Call to Ministry and Church Requirements as ideas important to their life worlds.

Table 20

Comparison of NCTS Reconciled Affinities with The Graduate Experience

NCTS Focus Groups	The Graduate Experience
Community	Relationships
Emotions	Emotions
Spirituality	Playing the game
Academic program	Career advancement
Ministry	Reward/purpose
Facilities	
Faculty and staff	Faculty and staff impact
Call to ministry	
Church requirements	
Life management	Life management
Transformation	Growth/transformation

Distinctive to the university study was the affinity Playing the Game, which described how students engage with a school's administrative procedures and system of communications. In order not to miss this dimension of seminary experience (even a small professional school such as NCTS has a certain level of administrative process to contend with), the researcher chose to add a twelfth affinity to the interview protocol, *School Bureaucracy*. In IQA terms, the use of these 12 affinities for the individual interview protocol is justified on the premise of shared meaning and common participation in the experience of being students. NCTS represents a specific type of graduate school.

Interview Protocol

In IQA methodology, the purpose of conducting focus groups is to discover how constituents think about the phenomenon that the researcher is examining. In this study of the seminary experience, focus group participants articulated categories that the researcher refined into 12 affinities. Table 21 summarizes the affinities and their

definitions. Each affinity became an open-ended question for individual interviews in the next phase of the study. Thus, the focus groups produced 12 questions. Because the researcher also was interested in asking participants if NCTS had an over-arching or dominant message in the education provided to students, the researcher added a thirteenth question to the interview protocol.

Table 21

Definitions of Reconciled Affinities, New Creation Theological Seminary Focus Groups

Affinity	Definition
Community	The relationships that NCTS students have with other NCTS students.
Emotions	The feelings of students in school.
Spirituality	The quest to sense the presence of God.
Life management	A student's life beyond NCTS.
Academic program	The curriculum taught at NCTS.
School bureaucracy	The official administrative procedures associated with school.
Call to ministry	One's perception that God is leading a person to a particular form of Christian service.
Transformation	Changes that students may undergo during seminary.
Facilities	The spaces and physical resources provided by NCTS.
Faculty and staff	NCTS professors, administrators, and employees.
Church requirements	Processes and expectations that church bodies have for those seeking ordination.
Ministry	Pastoral work that seminarians do in congregations and hospitals, including Clinical Pastoral Education and Ministry Practicum.

The protocol contained two sections. The first section provided succinct definitions for each affinity and asked in turn about the 12 affinities and the question

about an over-arching message at NCTS. In IQA terms, the first part of the interview asked *axial questions*. The second section (Relationship Coding), asks participants to talk about the relationships of influence between affinities. In IQA terms, these relationships are called *theoretical codes*. This part of the protocol produced a set of theoretical codes that the researcher aggregated and used to build group mindmaps for each constituency.

IQA Data Collection: Interviewing and Coding

This section reports the steps the researcher used to conduct and code individual interviews using the interview protocol described in the previous section, as well as aggregate the results of individual interviews into group systems, or mindmaps, for each constituency.

Individual Interviews

In the axial phase of individual interviews, the researcher provided a written description of affinity names and definitions to informants. The researcher asked the axial questions in turn, "Tell me about [affinity name]." The researcher asked some follow-up questions, but the bulk of the interview was scripted. The researcher varied the order of questioning depending on the responses from each informant to achieve a sense of conversational flow between topics. The researcher asked each axial question, covering all affinities discovered in the focus group process. All axial interviews were transcribed. The result was an average of six and a half pages of single-spaced text per interview. Chapter four reports the results of the axial portion of interviews in detail.

Coding Interviews

The previous section described the steps the researcher used to conduct individual axial interviews, each of which resulted in a wealth of data about a single participant's experience as an M.Div. student at New Creation Theological Seminary. This section describes the procedures that the researcher used to code each individual interview, the first step in taking raw data (interview transcripts) and reflecting on their possible meanings. In IQA terms (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), these procedures are the creation of an interview axial code table (ACT) and an interview theoretical code affinity relationship table (ART).

The axial code table (ACT) is a refinement of the interview transcript from the axial phase of the individual interview. In the table, the researcher created a word processing document in which all informant discourse was organized by the affinity headings of the interview protocol. The researcher analyzed each interview transcript, located examples of discourse about each affinity, and copied the relevant discourse into the table under the proper affinity. The researcher then further analyzed the discourse for each affinity to create smaller groupings, which became the sub-themes reported in chapter four.

The researcher also coded interview transcripts for *timbre*. "'Timbre' is to 'affinity' roughly as 'value' is to 'variable' in the quantitative research world" (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 345). For instance, feelings like joy, confusion, and frustration all formed part of a single affinity, Emotions. They differ in terms of timbre. In some cases, there may be a modal or dominant timbre for an affinity. In this study, the researcher coded the timbre for all affinities except one on a simple continuum of positive, neutral,

and negative. A rating of positive indicates that, for a given participant, their individual experience of the affinity was pleasant or useful. A rating of negative indicates that a participant's experience was unpleasant or not useful. A rating of neutral indicates that an individual's experience is neither positive nor negative.

During the theoretical phase of interviews, participants told the researcher about how various affinities exerted influence or were influenced by other affinities. In IQA terms (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), these are theoretical codes. Following the procedures described in detail in Appendix C, the researcher collected theoretical codes from a total of 37 participants, 16 in the first-career constituency and 21 in the second-career constituency. These codes were the basis for the group mindmaps for each constituency reported in detail in chapter four and interpreted in chapter five.

Chapter Three: Summary

This chapter detailed the method used in this study of the experience of first- and second-career seminarians at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). After a discussion of phenomenology as the underlying theoretical orientation for the research, the chapter described the research design employed for selecting NCTS and for inviting seminarians enrolled there to take part in the study. The chapter justified interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) as a method of choice and detailed how IQA guided the identification of preliminary themes of the seminary experience, the construction of interview protocols, and the synthesis of themes articulated by participants into conceptual systems, or mindmaps. Chapter four presents the results of the study. Chapter five interprets those results.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter does five things. First, it restates the purpose statement and research questions of this study. Second, the chapter reports the actual words of participants describing the 12 themes, or affinities, of their seminary experience. Participants describe 68 sub-themes and report the interplay, or flow of influence, between affinities. Third, this chapter describes and compares the mindmaps for the two constituencies of this study, first- and second-career students at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). Fourth, the systems for each constituency are compared in terms of timbre. Finally, the chapter concludes by reporting the results pertinent to this study's fourth research question, whether or not participants identified an over-arching message for their theological education at NCTS. Two distinct messages emerge, one noted by first-career students and another by second-career students. This chapter focuses on the presentation of results. Chapter five explores in depth the meanings and implications of the results.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study explores the seminary experience of first-career and second-career theological students in one free-standing Protestant seminary using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Specifically, this study investigates four research questions:

1. What themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?

2. How do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?

3. How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?

4. Do first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?

Exposition of the Themes of the Mindmaps

This section reports how participants talked about the 12 themes of their seminary experience. Participant discourse thus answers this study's first research question (what themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?). Following IQA protocols (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), pieces of discourse that illustrate themes or sub-themes are grouped together and reported as a block, as an ethnographer might when writing a life history (for example, Menchú, 1984). Quotations thus become evidence for the group's perception about an affinity, rather than simply voicing the viewpoint of a single informant. In some cases, the distinctive experience of a single participant is reported. All cases of one individual's experience are indicated by such phrases as "one second-career student said." Discourse introduced by phrases such as "students said" refer to block quotations of more than one individual. Because this research compared the life worlds of two constituencies, chapter four and five sometimes divides quotations by constituency.

To preserve the texture of the discourse of participants, the researcher retained many elements of spoken speech, such as contractions. In order to preserve the

anonymity of those associated with the research site, the researcher used pseudonyms to refer to NCTS staff, students, and building names. As a further protection for the student anonymity, the researcher edited quotations by using pseudonyms for places (e.g., East Hamlet rather than the name of an actual town) and using a general term instead of a specific term (e.g., "my presbytery" where the informant actually named a specific presbytery.) In interviews, participants commonly referred to faculty members simply by first name. To assist the reader's understanding, the researcher used a full pseudonym and title in synthetic quotations. Thus, "Nelson" became president Nelson Cavett and "Thelma" became professor Thelma Saddler.

Informant discourse in this section is organized by affinity. Discourse within each affinity is organized by sub-theme. The researcher determined the sub-themes of each affinity by analyzing the transcripts from the axial phase of 17 individual interviews. Following IQA procedures (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the researcher divided the axial interview texts into discrete units and clustered similar quotations together. The researcher then determined a name for the sub-theme. This technique echoed the method used to ask constituents in focus groups to identify categories of their lived experience. The key difference was that the researcher, rather than members of a group, made judgments about what constituted a sub-theme. Because this study compared two constituencies, the researcher first clustered sub-themes by constituency in order to discover if a particular sub-theme was distinctive to either first- or second-career seminarians.

In IQA terms, it is expected that a given affinity or sub-theme may contain a range of experiences (e.g, students may understand Transformation in various ways). A

given sub-theme may be the discourse about the life world of some, but not necessarily the majority, of informants. In this write up, all sub-themes report the experience of at least two informants. In chapter four, all quotations came from the 17 axial interviews conducted by the researcher.

This section notes cases where a sub-theme is distinctive to a single constituency. The order for reporting on the 12 themes follows the flow of influence from drivers to mid-system elements, ending with outcomes, as determined by IQA analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) and reported in detail in the next major section of chapter four. To assist the reader, each affinity is labeled by its position in the group mindmaps. Table 22 at the end of this major section summarizes the themes and sub-themes presented in this section.

Church Requirements (Driver)

Church Requirements, as defined in the interview protocol, are the processes and expectations that church bodies have for those seeking ordination. Participants described church requirements as a series of hoops. Some participants experienced church processes as valuable and supportive; for others, some church requirements appeared pointless or redundant. Students spoke about the level of support received from committees overseeing their progress toward ordination. Finally, many Presbyterian students commented on their church's ordination examinations.

Hoops

Participants reported that meeting church requirements involved jumping through a long series of procedural hoops.

> Being Presbyterian, it seems there's always some hoop you have to go through to get to the next step. First you have to go through the Session, then you have to get your psychological evaluation, then you have to go meet with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. They assess you annually. You have to meet the requirements to be an inquirer, then you have to write your statement of faith. They have to assess that. Then you have to go in front of the whole presbytery meeting and be approved. They ask you questions. Then you have the ordination exams. Sometimes it can seem overwhelming.

Church Requirements as Valuable

Some participants believed that church requirements were necessary and valuable.

> I understand that there need to be rules in place. I think PCUSA has a good process. You can't get anywhere without the approval of your session. That's important because they know you and not everyone else in the process does. You're entering a profession where you are going to be affecting people's lives. The church needs to be sure that you're ready to do that.
> As a Methodist, you start out with a lay guide who meets with you for about six months. That person helps you with your discernment. After you get through that, you are assigned to a clergy person you meet with for a while. She helps you with more discernment about your call to ministry. Then you go before your church. All of those steps were helpful for me and very affirming.

Other participants reported that church requirements were essentially redundant to the academic work and assessments conducted by the seminary.

> I don't want to take ordination exams. I went to law school and took the bar exam. Having to go through all those hoops again is exhausting. The church wants us to write another exegetical paper after taking three exegetical classes and doing well, and to preach to you. Why don't you trust the professors' judgment? It's repetitive. I'm doing this again only because the church says so.

Participants reported that it was challenging to attempt to meet church requirements and seminary requirements at the same time. "It's a railroad track. You've got the academic side and the ecclesiastical side. You've just got to remember both sides

of the track, not just one." Some participants chose to concentrate on meeting seminary requirements while in school, fulfilling church requirements after graduation.

> I'm going to finish seminary. I don't want to distract from the learning at seminary. My goal is to pursue whatever is left in the Baptist ordination process after I graduate. Within a year I can fulfill all their requirements.
>
> The next logical step would be being ordained by the Assemblies of God. After I graduate I will get the ordination process going again. They want me at a church serving as an associate pastor for two years to get experience. I'll have to take a test and talk to board members.

Supportiveness of Oversight Committees

Participants reported varying degrees of support from church committees responsible for overseeing their ordination processes. Some felt supported.

> My experiences with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry have been good. The party line is, the COPM interviews get harder as you move from inquirer to candidate. Mine got easier. They gave me a harder time as an inquirer: you're a lawyer, what do you want to do ministry for? By the time I got to the candidate stage, I had gotten to know them and they had gotten to know me. The candidacy interview was much shorter and easier, a totally different mood. My experience with my preparation committee has been easy because my dad's the general presbyter. They know him and everybody knows me. The COPM and my care committee seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in taking care of me in a pastoral way.

One Methodist student had already received permission to graduate with a diploma instead of a degree, should he prove unable to fulfill the school's language requirements for biblical Hebrew and biblical Greek. "The biblical languages are not expectations. We have already determined that if need be, instead of receiving an M.Div. degree, I'll receive an M.Div. diploma. That has already been approved by the district superintendent and the powers that be at denominational headquarters."

Other participants did not feel supported by their committees.

> It was a real challenge as I went through the early stages of the process with my local church. We didn't speak the same language. The COPM here caters to their students. They come and do their psychological interview on campus. But mine says, "No. Come on, fly out here," even though that meant going all the way to the West Coast.
>
> In Baptist structure, everything is local and autonomous. My association has no standing committee. Interacting with them has been difficult. The association has added requirements that I can't meet at NCTS, like Baptist polity. My committee doesn't have any connections in this state.

Ordination Examinations of the PCUSA

Presbyterian participants commented on deficiencies in the system of standard ordination examinations. Students complained that the examinations were poorly designed.

> The Bible content exam asks some of the most nitpicky questions I've ever seen. They asked things like "Is this passage from First Peter or Second Peter?" The instructions to the biblical exegesis exam said you don't have to have a working knowledge of the language in order to pass the exam. But several questions said, "Comment on grammar and syntax." You have to have a working knowledge of the language to do that. We all got comments back about how we should have done this or that with the grammar and syntax. The ordination exams are just stupid. I passed them on the first try. Most people did not. The exams measure your ability to take a timed test. No one is going to take the Bible and the *Book of Order* away from you when you get ordained.

Participants also commented on the way that the examinations are graded.

> Ordination exams are very subjective. What is frustrating is the way they're graded. They are graded by elders who haven't been to seminary. What they are testing isn't always clear. For example, the instructions say the answers are graded based upon entry-into-ministry level skills. In fact, they're grading you on how you would respond if you had been a pastor for 10 years. So there's this weird, seemingly random assignment of grades. On my polity exam, one of my graders wrote, "adequate citations used." But I still failed, so that's not a helpful comment to help me do better next time. It's frustrating. Grading is subjective. You have to hope that your idea of "pastoral" is the same as the person who grades you.

According to students, the examination results would be better interpreted by the committee that has established a relationship with the individual who wrote the test.

> Ordination exams are an anomaly of our process. The people in charge of your call process don't have anything to say about them. They don't write the questions. They don't read your essays. It is frustrating because they are the ones you've built relationships with for two years. I wish we could take the exams, have them graded by people that don't know us, and then send them to our committees. Then we could have the opportunity to explain what we meant.

Participants felt powerless to change the examination system and simply did their best to comply with the church's rules.

> It's an awkward process that no one really likes. Why exactly am I doing this? It's because they say so. It's a bar. I think that's ridiculous. But they didn't ask me. You quietly fill out your paperwork and pay them your money. And taking the exams costs 90 bucks a piece.

School Bureaucracy (Driver)

The interview protocol defined School Bureaucracy as the official administrative procedures associated with school. In their responses, participants broadened this narrow definition to include comments about individual administrators who implement policies and procedures. Students reported that the NCTS bureaucracy was efficient and provided a personal touch. They commented on admissions procedures, registration, and class scheduling. Students voiced some concerns about communication between the administration and students. Participants also spoke about housing policies and how the administration dealt with construction issues.

Efficient

Students reported that administrative procedures run smoothly.

> It's actually efficient, like lights and sound at a play. You only notice it if something's going bad, but it's been clockwork. I've been able to find out things I've needed to find out in a very timely manner. Paying fees is just a matter of going to the business office and doing it. I've never felt that NCTS was bureaucratic. Going to the registry of motor vehicles is bureaucratic and tortuous. These processes at NCTS were made delightful in accomplishing things that needed to be done. There's less bureaucracy here than any other place I've been. It's supportive if you need something. Mostly, it's invisible to me.

Personal Touch

Participants commented that the school's administration had a personal touch. Students were known by name and called administrators by first names.

> Things are pretty individualized, and that probably has something to do with the size of the institution. I'm amazed when I walk into an office for the first time and everyone seems to know my name. If you see the dean or the president on campus, it's all first names, very casual. For the most part, I've found everyone on staff to be really helpful.

In at least one case, the expectation that the administration knew every student individually did not hold true.

> I've met President Cavett several times, and he hasn't remembered me. Each time he called me a different name. In my second year, one of my friends introduced me to him as a prospective student, as a joke. The president said, "Wonderful, welcome to NCTS."

Administrators made students feel welcomed.

> For many people from Korea, the first person we see is the dean of students. She makes us feel comfortable. I see the door is always open for us. It's always done in an environment of care as a sister or brother in Christ. That's the really neat part.

Admissions

Students generally spoke favorably about admissions and financial aid processes.

> The procedures for financial aid and admission are valuable. During Discernment Days, you're interviewed by both a student and a staff member. You get to meet a prospective peer, someone who is not that

> different than you. My application process was really smooth. The paperwork was no problem.

One student reported: "After I was admitted, but before I started school, I found it difficult to get information. It took me three or four tries to get a copy of the academic calendar. It seemed to be a big mystery."

Registration & Scheduling

> For some students, registration was a straightforward process.
>
> Registration is an easy process. It goes really smoothly. The registrar is easy to work with in case you don't get a class that you signed up for. It is helpful to spend time with my advisor as part of class registration.

Other students expressed frustration about the short time period allowed for registration and the need for an advisor's approval of the student's schedule.

> The registration period is typically only one week long. If it's the wrong week, it can be really hard to find your professor. They might be traveling, or you might be traveling. That's a minor frustration. We get the final course schedule and then our registration is due between Monday and Wednesday of the next week. You only have a couple of days to look at your schedule and get it straightened out. Otherwise you have to pay a late fee. It's frustrating that you have to get your advisor's signature every semester to make sure we're taking all the right courses. It feels like we're in middle school.

Some students commented on the difficulty of taking some courses, either because of professors going on sabbatical or because the schedule appeared to be set for the convenience of instructors.

> Sometimes professors were on sabbatical, and there are only a certain number of courses, due to budget. They schedule classes at the convenience of the professor. That is not very helpful to the students. There were days when I had to drive back three hours from home because I had one class on Monday that lasted one hour. I really needed to be home on a Monday or a Friday for a work day. When I applied, I was told that we don't usually have classes on Fridays.

Communication

Students sometimes applauded the amount of communication between the administration and students. “I like how the business office and housing office send out emails about our safety or housing,” one student stated. Several participants, on the other hand, expressed the view that student voices were discounted by the administration.

> It doesn’t seem like students can really be heard by President Cavett. It seems like a big disconnect there. You just don’t feel like anything you say really matters. We’ve had community meetings in our leper colony with the staff in charge of housing to express concerns. Sometimes they’re acted upon and sometimes we feel like we’re ignored.

Students occasionally seemed unclear about policies or actions, due to lack of communication between the administration and those affected by administrative action.

> One example is the way we’ve been living down in the bomb shelter with all this construction. All of a sudden, fences pop up and you feel like you’re in prison. And we don’t remember hearing anything about that or any prior knowledge of that decision being made. There was a disconnect with all the spouses. Students would receive a lot of email about things happening. The spouse group talked to people and said that the spouses of students wanted to get those same emails. Now the spouses get those messages, too, which is great to rebuild that communication. I applied for housing this last semester and I didn’t get it. They refused because I had used up my housing units or something.

> Last year the issue of same-sex housing came up. President Nelson Cavett had called a student meeting about housing. He presented the issue as, “Tell me what you think about housing.” He didn’t even mention the same-sex housing issue. There could have been more transparency than there was, explaining his policy concern to the students. I was grateful that we had that meeting, but Nelson didn’t seem to process that people in general were more concerned with the condition of housing more than the same-sex issue.

Housing

Study participants voiced concerns about the seminary's housing policies and rates.

> There are discrepancies in housing prices. There may be back stories I don't know about as to why these things can't be changed, but it feels like we're being ignored. Some of the housing that is bigger in the bomb shelter costs less than housing that is smaller in the leper colony. There's not really a fair price list for all of the campus housing. Most of us are on tight budgets. When I was an undergrad, when you moved into an apartment, the rent was locked in, no matter how many years you stayed. Here, that wasn't the case. The rents go up. It's still subsidized and relatively cheap.

Students also expressed frustration about the administration's response to their problems because of the construction of Scholars Hall, a new student residence.

> We know the new building was very important to build. We complained about the construction noise starting at six o'clock when they said it wouldn't start until seven. It's really loud. We have guys standing right outside our window and talking at six o'clock in the morning. My poor wife works really hard. She needs all the sleep she can get. To have one of the administrators say, "You mean you aren't up at six a.m.?" implied that we are lazy. It doesn't matter to them what we say. That's been frustrating.

Faculty and Staff (Driver)

The affinity Faculty and Staff referred to NCTS professors, administrators, and other employees. Participants were extremely positive in their evaluation of faculty and staff, finding them supportive and caring. Participants commented on faculty skills as instructors and advisors.

Faculty as Supportive

Students reported that the faculty were approachable and supported students.

> The faculty are approachable. They're very down to earth. You can talk to them about virtually anything. They're very pastoral. They're there to comfort you and aid you. In a class there was a guest speaker, a former

NCTS student, and she said that even after seminary they are more than happy to answer your phone calls, which I find very comforting. I like the fact that some of them eat in the dining hall so that you can talk to them outside the classroom. The faculty is incredibly supportive and in tune with the individual students. I've benefited from individualized treatment. I've yet to find a class where I feel the professor doesn't care. The professors are very gracious about teaching students, and then not being overly judgmental about student work. They have to give grades, but the focus isn't on grades. The focus is on teaching students what they need to learn.

Faculty as Instructors

Participants generally praised the faculty as skilled instructors.

Professor Norman Cahill really worked with me my first semester. I did terrible on his first test. I went to him and asked, "What can I do to study better?" He gave me suggestions. I took the second test and I bombed it worse. I talked to him again and as we were talking, the material came out. He could see that the knowledge was there. He worked with me. He could have failed me, but he didn't. I wrote what I thought was a great final paper for Talia Sanchez. It came back with a "C." I was devastated because I'd put so much work in it. She told me that it was because I wasn't in the paper. I had made it a research paper when it was supposed to be reflective. She taught me how to self-reflect.

Thelma Saddler taught theology at a level so I could understand it and didn't feel I was the slowest one in the class. I call her a master teacher. She appreciated all learning styles. In her introduction to the class, she disclosed her personal position. Then she gave you tools and a roadmap. She has students waiting after class for her. She was very encouraging to me. I still go back and read her comments to be peaceful and to carry on. Thelma Saddler is an amazing professor.

When I first started in Nestor Cashwell's class, he was a little imposing. But you just loved the guy. There was something about him. Nolan Carlson has taught me more than anyone else here. He's a fantastic teacher.

Some students were unhappy with the teaching methods of some professors.

There are some professors very bound with a spirit or an idol of control. Things must be done in this specific way. Talia Sanchez made us handwrite our final—two-and-a-half hours of writing! My hand was ridiculously cramped afterwards. What's the point? What's wrong with a

> laptop? What's this control issue? Some of them need the skills of being an instructor beyond the skills of being a biblical interpreter. When you ask them what the course objectives for today are, they should be able to tell you. They should focus on the information you absolutely need to have.

Students reported that the faculty were a diverse group, used several teaching styles, and were open to the diversity of the student body.

> They bring their own personalities to the classroom. A lot of professors have also been pastors. I like that. It changes the dynamic in the classroom. They have different teaching styles, which allows them to connect with more students. They are diverse enough that you can find one for a mentor. As a Baptist, I've become stronger in what I believe in my own tradition while learning about other traditions. The faculty are willing to listen to a question from a perspective that's outside of the realm of Reformed theology or the Presbyterian or Methodist church. They've invited me just as I am. They've walked with me to teach me what they can to enhance my own tradition.

Faculty as Advisors

Participants reported that faculty functioned as advisors, sometimes helpfully and sometimes not.

> My advisor, Talia Sanchez, has been really critical to me discerning my call and learning how to self-reflect. She's always accessible, which has been great. This semester, I was upset with my registration. I didn't get into needed courses. Neville Cafasso, my advisor, helped me choose other good courses. Before that, we had spent our advising times chatting about my future and classes I might take. But when I really needed advice, he ended up being great. I was never able to catch my advisor when I was getting my courses set up. I'd slide my registration form under her office door and she'd sign it. I'm supposed to be through in December. I hope I've counted my courses right.

Other Staff

Participants reported that other NCTS staff were competent, caring, supportive, and took part in the greater life of the school. Participants stated that staff members were competent and professional. "They care about their jobs and are good at them. Traci

Sabastian in financial aid can direct you to resources you never even heard of. The registrar makes that process easy. We get regular emails about campus safety."

According to respondents, staff members were caring and supportive.

> They want to interact with students. Everybody is friendly and helpful. Anytime I go to anyone's office or the hospitality desk, I feel amazing care and compassion. People care for my academic area and my personal life. It is nurturing. They make me really comfortable. I feel like there's an open door policy with everyone on campus. If there's something you want to go talk to them about, they'll take the time to sit down and talk with you. It's a really warm environment.

One respondent contrasted the attitude of NCTS staff and those at State University. "I'm in between State University and the seminary because I'm in the dual degree program. I see two different worlds. Here everybody is ready to help any student."

Participants lauded the care provided by the dean of student's office.

> The best are Dean of Students Thora Sapp and Tess Salzman, how much they care for us. I had to go to the hospital, and Thora dropped everything and came out there and sat with me. I have grandparents who are dying. Thora and Tess are constantly emailing me and supporting me. When I first met Tess, I learned that she has been praying for me ever since I said I was coming to NCTS. She prays for all incoming students. Wow!

This level of warmth extended to secretarial and maintenance staff.

> I've been impressed with the level of caring about being Christians in the secretarial staff and the grounds staff. There is love and respect and kindness. The best bonds we have are with the maintenance crew. Billy will come up and give you a hug or ask how it's going. He can tell if you're happy or really sad. The maintenance guys will eat breakfast with you if you go to the dining hall early.

According to participants, faculty and staff were visible to students outside of their offices and took part in community events.

> They eat lunch in the dining hall. They go to chapel services and come to student events. We have constant interaction with faculty and staff.

> Whenever there's an after-school activity or function, it's really great to see faculty and staff members show up to mingle with the students, to be there and show that they care about the seminary.

Facilities (Driver)

The affinity Facilities refers to the physical spaces and resources provided by NCTS. Students commented on the campus setting, classrooms, the library, and student housing. First-career students also remarked on technology at NCTS.

Setting

In interviews, students commented on the attractive physical setting of the campus:

> The layout is beautiful. The lawn on the upper campus is green, lush, and beautiful. There are picnic tables behind buildings and balconies where we can meet and eat or talk. The little creek that runs through campus adds an uncommon dimension. It's like a park in the middle of the city. We're blessed in our geography. It's serene, calm.

Classrooms

Students reported that classrooms were adequate and commented on improvements in classroom furnishings:

> I like the small classrooms here. They are really tight-knit classrooms. There's space to study. There's space for community. I like to study in one of the empty classrooms. We have access to that any time of the day. This semester we've gotten new chairs and tables in Calvin Hall. The new furniture is quite a bit more comfortable than the old hard chairs.

Library

Students valued the library as a resource for their education.

> This library is awesome. The amount of theological and biblical texts there for research is amazing. I love it. I'm coming back after I graduate to do some exegesis. It's a blessing. The library is inviting. I avoided the library in my other learning environments because I didn't know where to start.

> Here, if you ask a question, the staff will tell you where to go and then ask if you want them to show you. They take the time.

Some noted with gratitude that the library had updated some of its technology: "The library is outdated, but it's wonderful that they put the power strips for computers in the reference room. That change has made people who have been here for three years happy, because that's the part of the library we use most."

Student Housing

Students valued that NCTS charged below-market rates for its student housing. "I feel so fortunate to have this subsidized housing. I know that if we were across the street we'd be paying quadruple what we pay."

Students reported that the condition of housing was mostly adequate.

> I've got my own dorm room. That's more than enough for me. I'd love to be able to take a shower and not have to dodge in hot water when someone flushes a toilet, but other than that, life's good. The facilities are average as far as apartments go. I've lived in the leper colony and the bomb shelter, but the leper colony apartments are not up to par as far as what student housing should be.

Nevertheless, students complained about cost disparities for various housing units. "The cost is a challenge for those of us living in the leper colony. We pay more per square foot than most people in campus housing do. I requested a dorm room because it's cheaper. Instead, I got a campus apartment. It ended up being fine. The cost ended up being about the same."

Students had a range of opinions about the quality of the maintenance for student housing. "My windows have not been washed in the two years I've lived here. Maintenance guys are always quick when they come over, but sometimes they don't do the best job. It's a temporary fix-up." Others said "The maintenance guys are top notch. I

never had any problem at all getting something fixed that was causing a problem for us. They keep the buildings up real well."

Some students noticed a double standard for maintenance between the academic side and the residential sides of the campus.

> When you cross the bridge from the residential side to the academic side, there is a definite shift in the upkeep of the grounds and of the buildings. That is a little disheartening. The administrative and academic side of the grounds is immaculate, and I think, "Wow, I'd like a lawn like that for my kids to play on." We have scruffy, stubbly, prickly unkempt grass. You definitely cross the railroad tracks when you cross sides of the campus.

While the study was conducted, NCTS was building a new student apartment house, Scholars Hall. Many participants were pleased with this decision.

> Scholars Hall will be a nice addition. It's nice to keep that centralized, cohesive feeling to the campus. We are all a little jealous that they are spending so much money on Scholars Hall and not on housing that already exists. They have a phased plan. We're just at the beginning stages of it.

Yet, the disruptions caused by construction had a negative impact on those living near the construction site. According to several participants:

> Scholars Hall has been the bane of everyone's existence. We live in the construction zone. I live in the bomb shelter. Things were very dusty and noisy when the worst of the exterior construction was going on. My apartment is dustier because of it. It was worse for people on the other side. You could hear the noise. We suffer the consequences. I live right behind the construction. I get awoken at 6:30 a.m. by hammering and sawing. The work lights are on. The crew is very nice. But there's a cost. I don't see my friends on the other side as much. It's difficult to walk around the construction zone.

Technology

First-career students also noted the school's efforts to improve access to learning technology on campus. No second-career students commented on the availability of technology at NCTS.

> Things are a little bit outdated. I think the school is aware of that and is doing some things to make the seminary more current. The library is outdated. It was wonderful that they put the power strips for computers into the resource room. The school is trying to figure out how to respond to the use of technology in the classroom. Now, we can't physically support some of the technology because of the electrical system. It would be costly to rewire, but it would be a nice thing to do. A lot of advances have been made in the two-and-a-half years I've been here, the student computer lab in the Luther Hall and renovating the student lounge in Calvin Hall.

Academic Program (Mid-System)

In the interview protocol, the affinity Academic Program was defined as the curriculum taught at NCTS. Participants reported that the academic program was cohesive. Some found the program to be challenging. Participants stated that many aspects of the program were linked to the practice of ministry, but some hoped for more practical courses. Students agreed that the workload was demanding. Non-Presbyterian students commented on what they saw as distinctive elements in a Presbyterian seminary program. Participants also commented on the teaching style of the faculty. They spoke about how the program brought about learning. Finally, students commented on the transition between their previous life experience and beginning seminary education.

Cohesive Curriculum

Participants lauded the NCTS academic program as cohesive and broad.

> The first year is rigorous. You learn two new languages. It's important that it's done that way, because throughout the second and third year, the themes from the first year keep coming back. You play with them and build on them. The first fall and spring the courses were well combined, one thing led to another and made sense. That happens to me every semester. Overall, the program was very well organized. My undergraduate work was at Liberty University in Virginia. It was always directed. The foundation wasn't always as broad as NCTS. You come through this program with a broad foundation in Christian education,

> pastoral care, theology, and preaching. The academic program here overall is solid.

Challenging

Many participants reported that the academic program was challenging.

> One reason I wanted to come to a Presbyterian seminary like NCTS is because they are academically rigorous. I knew any of them would give me a good education. NCTS is preparing people to be pastors. We're not selling it as an academic program, but that doesn't mean graduates are going to be stupid pastors. They're going to be smart pastors.

> The first semester of seminary was pretty academically challenging. You have to learn a new vocabulary when you come to seminary. I got over the difficulty that I had starting out. It never got easy.

For some students, the rigor of the problem led to lower grades than they expected.

> I like languages. I struggled with Hebrew and Greek. I failed some courses. When I attended the other seminary, my GPA was 3.9. Here, I can't do any better than a "B+." I worked my way through the three courses requiring Greek, barely passing. I'm doing the same level of work, but here I can't get an "A" in anything.

Participants reported that part of the challenge in the academic program of NCTS was due to the distinctive demands of studying theology.

> Theological concepts were new to me. It was like learning a language. It was a new way of thinking. In law school, I was trained to think analytically. But here I had to learn how to go beyond analysis in a theological sense. The first year systematic theology courses were *very* theologically challenging. The assignments weren't necessarily academically rigorous. You didn't have to spend five days studying for them, but they were challenging. They made you read and think about ideas that were new to you. I learned a lot.

Two participants, one first-career and the other second-career, had not been raised as Christians. They reported that even basic biblical and doctrinal knowledge was unknown to them when they began to study at NCTS.

> I didn't become a Christian until college. I didn't have Sunday school. I came to seminary having no theological background. I had a huge learning curve that first semester. I didn't grow up in the Church. I hadn't heard a lot of the terms. I didn't know the names of theologians. Everything was brand, spanking new.

For some participants, by contrast, the academic program was not especially rigorous.

> I came from a Bible college so I was pretty comfortable with the subjects, whether they be Old Testament, New Testament, etc. The curriculum follows through from the four years of undergraduate. It reemphasizes some of the topics, but goes into depth. I don't feel like I've been that academically challenged. Some classes are not academically challenging enough to be in a graduate program. I realize this is a seminary, not business school or Harvard. It's easy to slack in those classes, because the work isn't challenging. It was easier than law school. Law school is a doctorate-level program. This is a master's-level program.

Academic Program as Practical

Participants found some aspects of the curriculum practical, by which they meant directly related to the work of ministers.

> I've found every single class applicable to my future ministry in one way or another. I've taken a couple of elective classes on the practical side, such as leadership and conflict. I'm trying to keep a good balance of theological, exegetical, and practical courses. But I lean towards the practical side, those situations you're bound to find in parish ministry. The books used by the professors are tried and tested. They'll be great resources later on in my vocation. I'll be able to use them in the church. The curriculum is about the tools you're going to need. Everything has seemed applicable and helpful in a church setting.

Some participants suggested changes that would make the academic program even more practical.

> I'd like to see some changes. I don't think we get enough Bible study and theology courses. If you're a Presbyterian student, we need to study the *Book of Order.* That should be a requirement. I'm not sure how to tie in some of the books we read in class to actually doing Christian education in a congregation. I would have liked to have seen a little more practical

> application in some places, especially regarding how to conduct worship. Worship class focused on the theology of worship. There seemed to be an assumption that we would get practical training in the miraculous ten-week internship.

Two participants were adamant that many parts of the academic program were not helpful to their education.

> There are certain things taught here [that] don't have value. That's not to say they are not valuable pieces of information, but they are things I couldn't take into practical ministry. I invest my time in discovering materials, books, lectures, talks, sermons, and speakers, who I considered exponentially more valuable, practical, and more realistic than what NCTS teaches.

> Translation from the biblical languages is important, but should be the theologians, not the everyday minister. If I'd wanted to be a biblical scholar, I would have gone to Princeton. I came to NCTS. I want to be a minister.

Workload

Participants reported that the sheer volume of reading was overwhelming at times.

> The first year is hard, but not primarily because of academic challenges. The reading was overwhelming. I could never do all the reading. What I've come to learn by my senior year is that although I strive to accomplish all the reading assignments, it's not failure not to finish them. You should see it as part of a continuous discipline of learning.

According to students, the first year of the M.Div. program had an especially demanding workload.

> When I got here, I was prepared to lock myself in a closet and have extraordinary amounts of work to do. First semester can be that way. Then came Hebrew in January. By the spring semester, I felt more comfortable but was getting tired. By the time of Greek in the summer, you're feeling burnt out. The senior year is more manageable. I'm learning more because I don't feel as overwhelmed as I did my first year.

Students commented on the stress caused by learning Hebrew in an intensive course during a January term.

> In the morning we had class and then small groups. We studied together in the afternoons. We held that pace for three weeks, then there was an ice storm and we had a couple of days off so we could catch up. I didn't like learning Hebrew that way because it was so condensed. When I was taking Hebrew, I was lucky to get three hours of sleep a night, seven nights a week. After I finished, it took me several months to catch up health-wise.

Non-Presbyterian Perspectives

Students who were not Presbyterians comprised a minority of the student population at NCTS during the time that this study was conducted. Participants who were not Presbyterian commented on engaging an academic program in a Presbyterian context.

> Coming out of the evangelical Baptist tradition, my undergraduate work was always directed. The foundation wasn't always as broad as NCTS. You come through this program with a foundation in Christian education, pastoral care, theology, and preaching. Professors challenged me to learn beyond my assumptions and to step beyond my comfort zone. I didn't feel I was force-fed, but I didn't feel I was coddled.

> NCTS has a higher academic requirement than say, Perkins, which has no language requirement. We face here a greater academic challenge than from a more tailored Methodist experience. This education is a good one and would stand up against any.

> I had to adapt to the context of the Presbyterian seminary as opposed to my own denomination's background. Calvinist and Reformed approaches were new for me. I came with a Hamito-Semitic point of view. The curriculum here is very Eurocentric. Once I reconciled myself to where I was, at a *Presbyterian* seminary, I accepted that there wouldn't be an accommodation for my point of view.

Teaching Techniques

Participants commented positively on the ways that professors delivered instruction.

> When I visited during Discernment Days, I got to see professors make presentations. They seemed to be sincere, caring people who were also very intelligent and academic. The way they were going to teach appealed to me. The professors do a great job teaching with their own distinct

> styles. They take the abstract concepts and bring them into the real world. A lot of the professors are able to tailor expectations in learning to the student. If they think you can do more, they will push you, or they will back off if you are intimidated. What surprised me was that the first semester was all didactic tests. Every class had you take tests based on rote memorization. I wasn't used to that.

Participants also noted enthusiastically that professors accepted students of varying abilities and worked with them individually to promote learning.

> I found an amazing amount of invitation to engage professors. It's an old-fashioned mentoring methodology. The professors here accept people where they are, at a range of academic levels. They challenge you no matter where you are. If you want to go above and beyond what's in the classroom, a professor is perfectly happy to engage you in those questions. There's a personal, relational dimension to the academics in and out of the classroom.

One second-career participant lamented rather than praised the teaching abilities of the faculty. "Why is it," he said, "that experts with a Ph.D. don't know how to teach better than they do? They should focus on delivering the essential information."

Learning, Grades, and Competition

Some participants related that engaging the academic program meant being concerned with learning, not grades.

> The two systematic theology courses were *very* theologically challenging for me, but we only had two papers maybe in each class to write, a midterm and a final. It was neat to be able to engage the theological content without worrying about the grade. My undergraduate education was task-focused. Get this done, check it off your list, get your grade, and move on. Here, I've come to appreciate that there's something more than the grade. Here, we are encouraged to learn and to grow.
> A grade of a "B" with intense learning is far more valuable than an "A" that just spit back facts. I never really thought about my GPA. I just give everything I had to the class, and not a thought about grades.

Some participants, however, reported concerns with competition and grades.

> People say seminary is a non-competitive atmosphere. They're wrong. Competition is a bad component of seminary. A lot of people toot their own horn: I got this grade; this professor liked me. There is too much of that going on around here. There are no grades at my college. You don't worry about your GPA. You worry about what you learned. I started out on academic probation here, because I didn't have a GPA. So I had to prove myself. I learned a lot, but I had to be concerned about my grades.

Serendipity Learning

Participants reported that learning often happened in settings outside of the classroom.

> Conversations and learning are constantly going on, stopping in faculty offices and asking crazy questions, and getting crazy answers. I've learned a lot. There would be some really heated conversations about theology in the dorm. Some of us saw the move *A Bee's Life*. I was with a friend and she said, "I don't want anything theological," and it was there! Even in the movies! It's everywhere.

Some participants discovered academic abilities and interests that they did not know that they had before beginning to study in the seminary's academic program.

> When I started, I wanted to take practical classes like pastoral care and counseling. That didn't work out with my schedule, but I've found that I have a gift for biblical languages and theology. I've ended up in a different place than I thought I would be. A couple of my favorite classes have been Hebrew classes. I clicked with the professors. The topic became interesting to me and I wouldn't have thought that before I enrolled. That's been a nice surprise. I didn't expect to learn so many new things. I took electives that I never expected to take and got a needed foundation for a call and my faith.

Academic Transitions

Both first- and second-career participants commented on the transition from their previous lives to seminary study. First-career participants said:

> It just felt like I picked up where I left off in my undergraduate studies. I graduated, took the summer off, and I was right back into school. It was a natural flow. The transition wasn't that tough. The first semester of seminary was academically challenging. You have to learn a new

> vocabulary when you come to seminary. What surprised me was that the first semester was all didactic tests. I wasn't used to that.

Second-career students commented on the length of time between their previous academic work and starting academic study at NCTS.

> I had an eight-year gap after graduation from university, and I didn't study. I worked hard the first semester. I wasn't really ready for the academics again until my brain started warming up.
>
> Being out of the classroom for over 30 years, for me it was difficult from the get-go. I wasn't used to using my mind in those ways. I was an oil-field worker in my former career. I wasn't used to having to think about how things are. I got over the difficulty that I had starting out. It never got easy.
>
> I'd been through a BBA in accounting and law school. Theological education was new to me. It had been a number of years since I had been in school. The adjustment to being in school again took some time.

Second-career participants also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be students.

> I appreciate the opportunity I've had to attend here. At my age, becoming a minister by going through seminary is unusual. It's been wonderful to be back in school. I was the typical 18-21 undergraduate, not very self-motivated. I've learned how I am as a student. I'm considering going on to get a Ph.D. It's a great opportunity to come and carve out some time to study. That goes away when you get in the real world.

Spirituality (Mid-System)

The interview protocol defined the affinity Spirituality as the quest to sense the presence of God. Study participants commented on chapel worship, other group practices of spirituality, and individual spiritual practices. Some encountered God in nature. Two students who self-identifed as Korean or Korean American spoke of the distinctiveness of spirituality in their culture. Two participants reported the importance of classic

Pentecostal or charismatic practices. Many participants spoke of the need for discipline in spiritual practices because of time constraints. Finally, students reported that their sense of God's presence waxed and waned.

Chapel Worship

Some students spoke positively of participation in the seminary's worship in chapel.

> We have chapel four days a week. I love chapel. I went to chapel a lot my first year because I hadn't experienced the liturgical elements of worship in my churches growing up. Those elements spoke to my spirituality. I go to chapel as a spiritual discipline. The purpose isn't simply for me to get something out of it. It is the worship of God, so I should care if God gets something out of it. There's this serene, calm, peaceful feeling about the chapel. Worship doesn't have to be blah, blah, blah, in your face all the time.

Some students found their understanding of worship enriched by new knowledge obtained in classes on the theology of worship.

> I didn't really understand the richness and the beauty of the sacrament before I took Nestor Cashwell's class. It's really neat to see the elements of worship done really well in chapel. That spoke to my spirituality. At first I didn't feel anything in chapel. It was gloomy and boring. Nestor said, "Give it a chance." There's a lot to be said for sitting quietly waiting on God.

Others stated that newly imparted information interfered with worship.

> Even chapel comes down to academics. Instead of truly being able to worship, now you're worrying because Nestor [Cashwell] says you are supposed to hold my hands like this but you had them the wrong way. Once you've had the preaching class, when you're sitting in the pew, you notice things. Can I project my voice? Am I preaching correctly? It was easier to worship before I learned about worship. Then I could just enjoy it. But now I critique worship.

One participant found chapel services to be unedifying because they did not connect with the issues of the larger world.

> I don't get very much out of chapel. When I used to go, important things were happening on campus and in the world. But they weren't addressed at chapel. It's as if the outside world had no relationship to the seminary. If that's true, what are we doing here? If we are not going to recognize the situation in the world in our worship services, what are we doing here?

Group Practices

In addition to participating in chapel services organized by the worship committee of NCTS, students reported that they engaged in other spiritual practices in group settings. Students participated in a variety of worship services or spiritual discussions initiated by students.

> There's a student prayer service that happens every once in a while. They're doing the Taize service. They have their own style and their own ways. I organized a devotional group. We read some scripture and talk about it. That's a way outside of class work to get together with your buddies to stay spiritually centered.

Some students took part in a group organized by the academic dean. "I've been involved with the dean's prayer group. We read the psalms together and other books, then we discuss them. By reading about journeys of others you interact with someone else's spirituality and think about those questions in your own life."

Some students took part in seminary-organized spirituality groups or a group organized by students.

> We have spiritual direction groups. I've been involved in it my whole time here. My spiritual direction group of six remained together for two years. That was an invaluable component to my education. The group was a place where we came to look for God's presence in the midst of all that was going on. Most of us were married with children. We were challenged to look for God in the midst of our burdens. This year there's a new student group focused on spirituality, Be Still and Know. I think that's an important thing to add to student life.

Some students thought that "the seminary offers a lot of opportunities for spiritual practices." However, others said "I'd like to see more prayer groups and more Bible study, not the kind concerned about things like' 'how many years did this prophet minister?' but instead concerned with what is a biblical text says to me in my life."

Individual Practices

Study participants reported that they engaged in individual devotional practices. Prayer was one practice:

> There are praise and worship in my quiet times. My worship times last an hour to two hours. I want to be in the presence of God. I do daily devotionals. Ten of us joined the company of new pastors. We have a devotional book that has Old Testament, New Testament, psalms, and a reading from the *Book of Order* or the book of Reformed confessions. That has been really helpful. When I'm feeling certain things or anxiety, I enter into a breath-prayer, come into the presence of God, and lower my anxiety. Prayer helps me re-wire those thoughts to be more in line with what I believe God wants me to be. Since my junior year, I insist on having time alone, usually outside. Professor Noah Cartwright taught us several postures of prayer that can help us get into devotional time.

Another participant practiced meditation by studying physics, mathematics, and languages as a form of spiritual discipline.

> I study physics and science in order to meditate. I do mathematics. I do symbols. I do language. It's very structured, and I'm very unstructured. It's meditative because it is inductive, not intuitive. It requires linear, concrete thinking, and I tend to be more circular. I spend time alone, and I use study to focus and meditate to calm the emotional part of me.

God in Nature

Some participants commented that spending time in the natural world, away from people, aided their sense of God's presence.

> Growing up in the mountains, a large part of my spirituality was experienced by seeing nature. I find a lot of spiritual retreat in nature, in the mountains, in parks, and being outside. Here, sometimes there are too

> many people to have solitude, a spiritual moment. I have not really felt God's presence on campus. My home is in the country, in the midst of God's creation. To get there, I go through the woods on a dirt road. I sit in my easy chair and watch birds flying over our deck. That's the environment I meditate in.

For one participant, taking part in a NCTS experiential learning course involving mountain camping was a new spiritual experience. "A good setting for spirituality was the wilderness course. Women in my culture, we don't go camping. We don't sleep outside. But God let me choose to go with the whole team, walking in the mountains, being with everyone. I saw another way to do spirituality."

Distinctive Spiritual Experiences

During interviews, Korean and Korean American participants, and Pentecostal or charismatic students voiced distinctive perspectives on spirituality while attending NCTS. Korean and Korean American students said:

> I think that the Korean community is more in tune with the spiritual aspect of reality, like praying for one another, miracles, and evil spirits. Sometimes non-Korean people get uncomfortable with that. In Korean seminaries, you pray fervently, meditate, and read scripture in groups. You have mandatory morning prayer at four or five a.m. Because of my mission experience, I got other ideas. I appreciate this setting compared to Korean seminary that demands so much prayer. Because there is hardly any free time, students don't develop personal character. Here, I am free to take care of myself. That really frees me to find my own way of pursuing spirituality.

Two participants reported practices associated with baptism of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues.

> In September I sought baptism of the Holy Spirit. I was introduced to it through my church. In Acts chapter two at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit falls on a group of people and everyone starts speaking in strange tongues, and understanding each other and prophesying. Spiritual gifts are poured out: prophecy, words of knowledge, healing, signs and wonders. These things all come with baptism of the Holy Spirit. So now my worship times last an

> hour to two hours, because I want to be in the presence of God. One of my friends recently got the spirit baptism of tongues. He knew that I spoke in tongues, too. Speaking in tongues is the most wonderful form of worship. I swear endorphins are released when I do this. I go away absolutely refreshed.

Participants who spoke in tongues reported tolerance and some interest from other students.

> I've thought that people shun the Holy Spirit and the spiritual realm. I didn't know if I should speak loudly in tongues, because the walls between rooms in the dorm are pretty thin, and it might make people feel uncomfortable. My neighbors on each side said, "It's cool. We like it." Lately people are coming out of the woodwork saying, "I'm totally comfortable with speaking in tongues."

Time Constraints and Discipline

Students reported that time limited their participation in various spiritual practices.

> Spirituality is easy to let slide while you're in seminary. Sometimes I've been so focused on studying or getting papers in that I haven't spent time with God, praying, or reading scripture. That's something that I'm constantly working on. I tend to do devotions by myself, because there's not always time to get everybody together.

Students noted that certain times in the semester faced them with the apparent choice of engaging in academic work or engaging in spiritual practices.

> You can't forget to talk to God and listen, even if it's the middle of the semester or during finals. When I'm going to school and having to write papers, I don't have time to do daily devotions. Not everybody goes to chapel. Some say, "I need to study for a test." I started out with a different approach: If I do my part by going to chapel, the test stuff will work out. Whatever I could learn in that extra forty-five minutes to an hour is not going to save me nor cause me to fail.

Students with families reported that family obligations limited time available for spirituality.

> It's hard to be spiritual at seminary from a logistical standpoint, especially if you have kids and a family. You don't have a lot of free time. I had developed spiritual practices that got disrupted with a shift in schedule my first year of seminary. By the end of junior year, I was on a super fast speeding train and there wasn't anything I could do about it. Academics and family came first and other things fell to the bottom. My practices are haphazard.

Participants reported that considerable effort was required to develop a consistent pattern of spiritual practices.

> What hurts your spirituality is that you study about God so much that you forget to talk to God and listen. Doing that is a matter of discipline. People coming to seminary want spirituality. Then they complain when it's not handed to them on a platter. You have to participate. I remember my pastor saying, "You can't feed a congregation unless you're fed yourself." You need to go to your Bible and do your daily devotional, pray, and maintain spiritual equilibrium. I have to be very intentional about spirituality and pay attention to what happens to me when I'm not. I took Noah Cartwright's class on spiritual practices for church leaders. That was really good because it showed me how spiritual practices can become part of my routine. Going to chapel is a spiritual discipline. Even if the sermon or worship style is not what you prefer, there is still something to be gained by going to chapel.

Another student noted that time pressures will not necessarily lessen after completing seminary. "I have no one to blame but myself for letting my spirituality lag in the last three years. I know it's not going to change when we get into ministry, and we have sermons, visitation, and other things that get in the way of spirituality."

Sensing God, Bidden or Unbidden

Participants reported that their sense of God's presence waxed and waned and that the spiritual life involved struggle.

> I feel the presence of God more strongly some times than others. A lot of it has to do with my level of obedience. When I'm out of order, I'm just a mess. Sometime after Hebrew, I remember feeling so spiritually empty. I went on the spiritual retreat. That was a wake-up call for me. In my Clinical Pastoral Education this summer, you'd see certain cases and

> you'd just ask yourself, "Why?" So that's been one of my spiritual struggles. It's ironic. You're in a seminary training to be a pastor, and you can't find spirituality.

Participants reported that God's presence was sometimes felt in surprising, unbidden ways.

> Spirituality here has a way of coming up behind you and whacking you on the head. It might be a conversation with other students or a faculty member. You come away feeling recharged. There are surprises. In a sermon, Professor Nicholas Cable talked about the fact that intellectuals can experience God when reading. It's not the actual reading of the words. You can't make it happen, but you can be open to it. God comes to you. I can read the writings of Calvin and have a spiritual experience.

Community (Mid-System)

The interview protocol defined the affinity Community as the relationships that NCTS students have with other NCTS students. Participants described community as a core value of the school. They spoke of NCTS as a welcoming place. Participants reported that community did not happen on its own. It required students to make efforts to establish relationships. Those interviewed spoke of the value of informal student groups. They said that community had some conflicts. For participants, community included relationships with the families of students as well as students themselves.

Core Value

Participants reported that community was a core value of NCTS.

> One of the things it says on the banners on campus is "Being an Exemplary Community." I've observed faculty and staff advocating community. In any organization there's an official community, and then there's a one-on-one community. I know there's inclusiveness as part of the official community. We preach community, community, community. A lot of students reach out to involve everybody and get people together. We're part of something that's alive. You become part of an extended family. I don't feel that connection with my undergraduate program. When

> I visited here and I kept hearing the word 'community,' I wanted to roll my eyes and say, "Enough of the community thing." But I've found it to be true. Community is a core value here.

A Welcoming Community

Many participants reported that NCTS was a welcoming school.

> People are warm and welcoming. This institution desires to represent the body of Christ. NCTS is a loving environment, but not sentimental love. It's the love of respect and care and the willingness to say, "I don't see it that way, but let's talk anyways." Or the insight to say, "You're hurting. I'm just going to be with you." There's a genuine desire to live out this call to faithfulness. As Methodists, we were greeted warmly and treated well. Then we were treated as students, never once singled out or put into a special group. There was one student who was very intentional about inclusiveness, and I felt very welcomed by him. I appreciate it when it's not forced.

Participants reported that NCTS made a positive impression of welcome while they were deciding which seminary to attend.

> I first came to know NCTS through Discernment Days. That's where community began for me. You met faculty that introduced themselves. They answered your questions, even before you were a student. Community was overlooked at some of the seminaries I visited. When I visited another seminary, I was told that the student body was really cliquish. I didn't find that here.

> The reason I came to this seminary was the community I felt when I visited. I came during the January Hebrew class. Three students I met were really warm and welcoming. Because of their welcome, I knew this was the place I wanted to come.

Not every participant, however, felt welcome at NCTS. One first-career student reported that he felt that he was not accepted because of his conservative theological views.

> In regard to community stuff, I feel like an outsider. Maybe one or two people are on the same page with me. I'm viewed as a fundamentalist or a Republican—two things which I'm not. There's this stereotype around here about anyone who has come to know Christ, says that Scripture is

> authoritative, and who believes that Jesus is who he says he was. This is not a place of belonging or acceptance for me.

One second-career student reported feeling unwelcome by the White majority. She socialized with other students from her home country.

> If there is a party, I don't feel welcome. If there is a community pot luck, we foreign students don't go. I don't know what to bring or what to prepare. I've lived in the U.S. for just a couple of years. For the first few minutes it's OK, but after a while, the talk focuses on American stuff. It becomes energy consuming, not relaxing. I don't have a chance to share my culture unless they ask. I always have to be the listener. So, I join with my community. Two other students from my country moved into the dorm. We socialize together.

Engagement

Participants reported that the quality of relationships that students have depends on taking personal initiative to engage in community activities.

> How involved you are here depends on how much effort you put into it. I've seen students who don't get involved quickly in their junior year. They fade away, and you don't see them. But when people take initiative and get into a small group, they do a lot better here. You can be a part of NCTS very quickly. It's safe to be part of as much as you are able or desire to. We have an awesome community here because people are so willing to be in community. People are willing to show up and take pride in being a NCTS student.

Participants also noted reasons that limited student engagement in community activities. For some students, family, work, and church had a higher priority than relationships with other students.

> I try hard to make family first. Studies and classes come second. People ask you to go out after class, and I can't do that. I don't go to Student Forum anymore because I need to get home and help my wife with the babies. I have friends here. I value those relationships, but I have responsibilities off campus. My community is in East Hamlet, the firm I work for, and my family. I've had very little to do with students here at seminary. Most of my time goes to my ministry and Hope Church. They

> are my body of Christ, my church home, where I have nearly all of my relationships.

Commuting also limited the ability of students to take part in campus community. One second-career student reported, "For me, community has been in class and being in the dining hall for lunch. A lot of the other student activities are on Thursday nights or the weekend. I'm not here for those because of my commuting schedule."

Student Groups

Participants reported that formal and informal groups were important in their experiences of community. NCTS had some formal student groups, recognized by student government. "There are student groups, like the Christians in Action group, which wants to explore service and righteousness." For participants in this study, the formal groups were less important than informal groups. When asked about small groups, one participant said, "We had the ones that the dean of students organized, and then the real ones formed later." For participants, informal groups provided support both inside and outside of the classroom.

> You need a support system. The group that I met during my campus visit was really tight as friends and shared a sort of community within community. In any graduate program, having a cohort is a great thing. Having one that you constantly interact with outside the classroom is even better. Having a cohort here has been great.

According to participants, informal small groups often developed by the common experience of taking classes together.

> In your first year, mostly you are all taking the same courses. I was part of a small group. It started when we did Hebrew together. You become really close during Hebrew. Throughout my three years I've built really strong ties with a little core group of friends. I think that will last past seminary and will be invaluable further on the road. I found them through taking classes together. We had a lot of similar interests.

Other small groups formed because of shared background and a desire to maintain a separate sense of identity.

> As a Methodist, knowing who the other Methodists were mattered to me. We had a very strong community. Seven of us have formed a tight group of friends. They are the ones I talk to when I have questions. We are all about the same age and are all from outside the state. We have a club, N-FAH, Not From Around Here. That's a secret. We all came from the same kind of background before seminary. A lot of the students here are local, so to have a support group was important to me. We evangelical types at NCTS have a subculture. When we get together, we pray, speak in tongues, and prophesy over each other. We do the fun stuff. We can't do those things in the chapel. This is a mainline, very liberal seminary. Our ideas are much more conservative.

Conflict and Problems

Although many participants reported that NCTS nurtured good relationships between students, those interviewed also reported that problems existed. Dorm life was not without tension.

> The last two years, Bucer Dormitory was very cliquish. Being a part of a crew mattered. I know that a lot of people felt left out of the Bucer community. In fact, people wouldn't even come down to the kitchen and eat with everybody because they felt left out. In class, everyone is nice and polite and gets along. There's a whole other kind of student life in the dorm. Living in all one building, living next to each other, and sharing the lounge can create some good relationships. But you can really get annoyed with people at the same time.

Participants living with their families in student housing also reported conflicts.

> It's not idyllic. There are fights and problems and kids not talking to each other. My children have the opportunity to live in a close community and deal with the crap that goes along with it. There are disagreements about whether dogs should be on leashes or not. There are people that don't speak to each other. We are supposed to love people as they are, not like we want them to be. It's not always easy. I think you buy into this Utopian vision of us all living together in harmony, so it's kind of a surprise when you realize that we're going to have problems, too. People mostly speak the same language in trying to bring problems to resolution, and that feels good. But it's not all easy. For instance, I had a conflict with someone two

> years ago. We both did and said things that we regret. Everything that I've done to get beyond it has been completely rebuffed. That's a long time to hold onto bitterness.

Some participants saw conflict as an opportunity to develop skills in articulating their own viewpoint and listening to the viewpoints of others.

> I think conflict is a good part of community. Sometimes we're too nice. We don't want to bring up problems in public. We talk about them behind each other's backs instead of approaching the subject and getting it aired out. In systematic theology class, Professor Thelma Saddler encouraged us to have conversations and dialogue and not argue. Her advice built good relationships.

> I attended the student social justice group for a little while. My views were different from many of theirs. I wanted to see if they would see the other side of issues. People tried to give me an honest hearing. I respected the group's orientation but couldn't participate in their activism. I became friends with many on opposite sides of issues. We've continued the conversation. We've developed a language of respect. Instead of debating, we try to listen to each other. That's been helpful in other areas of learning.

Families

For participants, community included relationships with the families of students as well as relationships between students.

> One reason I was drawn here was the variety of ages, family configurations, and life experience. Families tend to do things with families, and single people tend to do things with other single people. But there's a lot of intermixing of those groups. Kids can run all over. Walking up to my friend's apartment to take her daughter to ballet, two other little girls came up to me to say, "Hi," and give me a hug.

> When I applied to be a matriculated student, we put our house on the market because we wanted to move our family here to be part of the community. It seemed like an important aspect of the experience.

> I didn't think that seminary would change my family's life very much. I thought that I would take classes and it wouldn't be a big deal. After two years of commuting, we moved on campus. It was the best thing we ever did. Now we live in a more socio-economically diverse community. Here,

> my kids play outside. Other kids come to our door all the time. People call me their second mom.
> When we come here, we bring our spouses with us. They meld into that community. Living off campus now, my wife doesn't have that experience any more. She misses it.

Call to Ministry (First-Career: Outcome; Second-Career: Mid-System)

The interview protocol defined the affinity Call to Ministry as one's perception that God is leading a person to engage in a particular form of Christian service. Participants reported that the call to ministry was an intuition received from God about their path in life. For many, the sense of call developed slowly. Some reported a sudden call or a specific triggering event. Participants affirmed that one's sense of call was affirmed by others. According to participants, understanding of one's particular call to ministry often changed because of attending NCTS.

Intuition of the Divine

Participants described call to ministry as an individual intuition.

> You have this feeling when something's right for you. I knew I wanted to be a pastor. I began to feel called to go back to church. You get that little feeling in your head. It's just like somebody's in the pickup truck with you talking to you. Professors here are open to talk about call, but I think it's an individual thing. I knew I was being pulled towards the pastorate. I felt a very strong leading. There is a desire. It's almost too good to be true.

Participants interpreted this intuition as coming from God.

> For quite a few months, I prayed about where God could best use my talents and gifts and abilities. That's when I felt called to ministry. I felt tugged to go into the church. My call was a combination of the community's call and my sense of God's urging. God called me to do His work. I don't know exactly where I'm going to end up. I figure God will speak up again when it's time for me to know. God has shown a propensity to do that. Within my head I heard a voice that said, "Stand up and talk for me." I just trust God to direct.

Slowly Developing

Several participants reported that their sense of call grew slowly over time.

> God's been revealing to me slowly where my strengths are, where my weaknesses are, where my passions are. I totally believe that God had shaped me and wired me for ministry. My call wasn't glamorous. It was consistent throughout my life. My call has happened over a lifetime. My family was always heavily involved with church, so I always felt called to participate and be in leadership. I also took part in youth groups and camps. I loved it. In high school, I became an elder. I participated in the congregation and at presbytery level, synod, and General Assembly. I look at call in the context of my marriage. My husband and I were both called to ministry. It wasn't a discrete thing.

One second-career participant moved from joining a congregation to use its daycare program to baptism, congregational leadership, and eventually a call to seminary.

> I didn't join a church for noble reasons. I joined because I wanted my daughter to be in the Mother's Day Out program. I was baptized along with my two children. I was about 30. By then, I had developed a faith. I felt that I was part of a faith family. Once I felt included, I became an active member. As my service grew, people said I should be in the church's leadership. My husband thought that he had a call to ministry. We went to Discernment Days at NCTS. A couple of the professors said, "why don't you come, too?"

Another second-career participant described how his sense of call grew over several years, starting with a powerful experience during an Emmaus Walk retreat and maturing as he read Christian theologians.

> I went on an Emmaus Walk a year after Dad passed away, just after I was laid off. I prayed not to get rid of the memories but to get rid of the hurt. Within my head I heard a voice that said, "Stand up and talk for me." The next two or three years, my sponsor and I established a successful lay speaker program. After a year or two, I kept hearing the voice as if this wasn't enough. I did more research reading Luther and others. I thought that my gift was my technological skill. I was reading Barkley one time. He said that Jesus started his ministry at age 30, but that's not the 30 of today. That's like 60 today. Jesus had a career before his ministry. So I decided to do the ministry route.

Sudden Calls and Triggering Events

Not all participants reported that their sense of call developed slowly. For some, a call to ministry came suddenly.

> The summer before I went to college, I was on a mission trip to Mexico with some middle-schoolers and clearly heard the call to ministry. It was a very bizarre experience because I had never really felt called in that way before. I had never really thought about going to seminary. It was a 180 kind of thing.
>
> I came to know Jesus Christ at age 19, like a lightning bolt, and was a new person in two days. Immediately after that I was called to Young Life, a high school evangelical outreach ministry. I despised Young Life when I was in high school. I went because of cute girls, but God called me into a ministry I hated.
>
> I had not remotely considered ministry until the last week of September in 2005. A friend of mine said, "I've been hearing way more from God about *you* than me. I think you're going into ministry." I said, "No, I'm not." Driving home I thought, "That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. Okay, God, on the off chance that you're serious, I'm gonna have to hear that from somewhere else. Why don't you use my pastor?" It wasn't even a week later that I was standing in her office. She got this staring-off-into-the-distance look on her face. She said, "I have to ask you if you've ever considered ministry." Then she spent the next hour and a half scraping me off the ceiling.

Some participants for whom a sense of call developed slowly reported a specific event that triggered or heightened their consciousness of a call.

> I worked at a clothing company. One of our designers was murdered. Her murder really affected me. She was amazing. She wanted to do good things in the world. She wasn't religious in a mainstream church way but she had grown up in church. She was spiritual. She wanted to bring light to the world. I knew that her legacy had to continue. I knew that it was time for me to go back to church.
>
> I was taking courses as a special student and thought seminary was something I would do some years out. By the end of Discernment Days, I was convinced I was being led to apply, so I did. Much to my surprise, I was accepted.
>
> My husband was a pastor. He affirmed my call to ministry and coming here two days before he died. That is huge in the Missionary Baptist Church.

> A year after my dad passed away, just after I was laid off, I was under a lot of emotional stress. My uncle said that I should go on an Emmaus Walk. When I was on that walk, I prayed to get rid of the hurt. Within my head I heard a voice that said, "Stand up and talk for me."

Affirmed by Others

Although participants reported that a call to ministry was a calling from God, they also affirmed that their sense of call developed or was confirmed by others. Some participants spoke with their pastors.

> I felt tugged to go into the church. At first I thought, "Really, God? You want me to go into ministry?" So, I talked to my pastor. We talked about it, and I felt it was the right place for me. When I first got involved with church again, I went in and talked to the pastor about it. She was a graduate of NCTS. She hooked me up with the people here. I was on the admission director's mailing list after that. When I was in college, I was involved in a church in College City. My senior year, I had an internship with the college ministry program. I had opportunities to feel out that call and see if I heard God right. I had great support from the pastors at that church. They helped me define my call.

Some participants found affirmation for their call from church members.

> What solidified my call was, I was preaching in my home church. I hadn't told anybody at the church yet that I was working on discerning this call and I'd already looked at the seminary. After I preached, eight people said, "Have you thought about ministry?" The congregation was affirming my call. I don't think you can make it through seminary if you don't think you are called by God. To have the affirmation from my home church has been very helpful. The session of our church recognized my call.

Participants reported that the processes required by church rules contributed to their sense of certainty that they were being called to ministry. One Presbyterian student said: "I'm PCUSA. There was a great emphasis placed upon how did you discern and describe your call. To have the affirmation from my home church and presbytery has been very helpful." A Methodist student related how he expected the layers of his church's vetting process for potential leaders to end his exploration of a call to ministry:

> I thought I was meant to be a good lay person. I kept getting dogged. I said, "OK. The people at the local church know me. There will be enough No votes, and I'll be done." Then I went before the Pastor-Parish Relations board—a lot of people I've had battles with. The vote was unanimous. Then I had to go to a church conference and it was unanimous again. Now I had to go before the district board. I thought they'll say "No," but it was unanimous again. Then I said, "OK, let's do this thing." Wesley said there are two calls, one of the church and one of the heart.

Sexism

Three second-career women interviewed for this study reported that their sense of call was shaped in some part by sexism in their respective churches. One participant said, "I had a hard time as a woman in the church in my home country. We can be ordained as a pastor, but still there are huge obstacles. Most of the time they don't give us a chance." Another participant said, "There's no place for a woman to be a pastor in Missionary Baptist Church. Where I did my Ministry Practicum, the pastor has two female ministers to assist, but it caused division in the congregation." One United Methodist described her experience of a double standard in appointing men and women ministers:

> I am dismayed about how women in ministry are treated in my denomination. I'm Methodist, and we're placed. When I was testing the waters, I was told not to be concerned that I have family members with chronic illness because the bishop would take that into account in placing me. But I was told by a local district committee that I should expect to be transferred wherever the bishop wants me to go and that my family doesn't matter. That would be fine if that's the way it is for everyone, but I know that a man who went into the exact same committee was told that he shouldn't worry that his wife has a career as a doctor in town. They'd make sure they placed him so that her job wouldn't be uprooted. He's not the only male that I've heard who's had that offer. I'm struggling with that. It seems like sexism but of course nothing I can prove. It's done behind closed doors.

Change in Understanding of Call to Ministry

Participants reported that their understanding of call changed over time. For some, engaging in the academic program and ministry experiences has shifted the focus of their call.

> Your call changes when you're here. Before I came to seminary, I didn't know if I wanted to do nonprofit work or the dual degree with social work. But taking worship class, I realized that I really love the liturgical aspect of the worshiping community. I want to serve a congregation. That was the biggest defining moment of my vocation.
>
> You come in with that notion, "I'm going to be a solo pastor." This summer, while doing CPE, I had a lot of discernment. I worked with psychiatric patients and loved it. I believe I'm being called to hospital chaplaincy. My call changed because of doing CPE.
>
> When I came here I felt called to camp and conference ministry. Now I feel more called to parish ministry. I didn't know if I would feel comfortable if I got called as a solo pastor. I didn't feel prepared. The shift happened through my classes. I feel more confident.
>
> It's a challenge to live into my call. Here, I could explore the depth and richness of a call to ministry beyond a narrow focus and explore my gifts. I've discovered I have a particular affinity for pastoral care.
>
> Since starting seminary, I find that I'm interested in leadership development.
> I came to seminary intending to serve congregations. But my call has changed dramatically since I've been here. I'm not sure if I'm being called into the church or not. I'm clear that I'm going to try to get into a Ph.D. program.

Participants stated that it was important to test their sense of call during seminary and to be open to unexpected changes in its direction, if God wills.

> It's crucial for people to keep on discerning their call and keep on questioning where God is leading them. Young Life remains my calling until God gives me the green light to move out of that ministry, which I am willing to do at any time. He's Lord, and I'm not. I felt a very strong leading to go to seminary. I've never veered from that. I take it a day at a

> time. I don't know exactly what I am going to do. I have some inklings. I trust God to direct. So, I'm still discerning, always discerning.

Ministry (First-Career: Mid-System; Second-Career: Outcome)

In the interview protocol, the affinity Ministry was defined as the pastoral work that seminarians do in congregations and hospitals, including Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and the Ministry Practicum, the required experiential learning course at NCTS. Students spoke about the importance of having a sense of fit with a specific ministry setting. They reported that they engaged in a variety of ministry tasks and made new discoveries. Finally, they said that engaging in pastoral work clarified their sense of call.

The Importance of Fit to Ministry Setting

Participants praised the work of the director of Ministry Practicum, Noah Cartwright, for placing students in good settings.

> My Ministry Practicum was fabulous. Noah Cartwright was guiding me. He made phone calls for me to get a placement. Noah Cartwright really cares about the Ministry Practicum. He gets to know you before you have your first meeting with him to discuss placements. It's important to be matched with the right supervisor.

Students affirmed that a key to a positive Ministry Practicum experience was their relationship with a supervising pastor who understood the expectations of the program.

> I was placed at a wonderful congregation with a great pastor to learn from. I try to pick his brain. I'm getting good feedback from my supervisor about my ministry. There are a lot of ministry opportunities because supervisors are made to understand what the internship is about. The intern is not a gopher to get you coffee and make copies. Last summer I was going to do my placement, but I developed concerns about the supervisor. I thought, you can put up with anything for ten weeks, but then I thought, that's not the point of the Ministry Practicum. So I cancelled. A bad supervisor can kill your internship and close down your feeling of call on a false note.

Variety of Ministry Tasks

Students reported that they engaged in a wide variety of ministry tasks during their Ministry Practicum.

> I got to experience ministry in a small church. I preached six times. I did pastoral care and vacation Bible school. I taught an adult Sunday school class. When the pastor was gone for two weeks, I was in charge. I did it all. I got to do some pre-marital counseling. I got to do the pre-planning for a funeral. I did worship leadership every Sunday morning and other things like session meetings, committee meetings, and communion visits. I led a Bible study on Wednesdays. They asked me how to say some words in Hebrew, and they were fascinated. Introducing them to the language of the Old Testament was a highlight of my Ministry Practicum. I was able to experience different aspects of ministry with the same family.

Students also gained valuable ministerial experience by preaching in congregations and other settings.

> I've done a lot of supply preaching. It's challenging. You preach in tiny churches in the country to six people sitting in the back two pews. My main experience preaching happened back in West Texas when I took a year off. I've never failed to come out of the pulpit feeling charged up. A big part of my ministry is presenting the person of Christ and the gospel. This past summer I presented the gospel to 50 high school students for our Young Life freshmen road trip weekend.

Some participants worked with church youth groups. "I wanted more ministry experience," one first-career student reported. "I worked for about a year with a church youth program."

Experiential Learning

Students reported that Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) was valuable because students learned by directly interacting with patients.

> It was toss you in the fire and see if you could survive. We did orientation, and the next day I had my first referral to a schizophrenic who believed that Satan was after him. I got tossed out there. I went from being a seminary student to suddenly having pastoral authority in that situation.

> You can't teach from a book. You have to experience it. I'm a very hands-on learner. In CPE, you gain invaluable experience.

Another student affirmed the value of experiential learning in a course set in a hospital.

> In the January term I took the hospital chaplaincy course. It was a blessing from God. In the course, you had your orientation, and they told you to go and do your thing. That's how you learn. I learned about my strengths and weaknesses. It really helped in my maturation process, preparing me for the ministry.

New Discoveries

Participants reported new learning in Ministry Practicum.

> I've learned in my Ministry Practicum that a lot of ministry is behind the scenes, like folding the bulletins and planning. You do a lot in the office and in the evenings in people's houses. A lot of times, you see the public view of the pastor. You don't see the late nights working on sermons because you've done four pastoral care conferences during the day. That's a new discovery for me.
> I did my Ministry Practicum last summer for ten weeks in West Hamlet. I chose it because it was a new development and because it had a female pastor. I wanted to see what life was like as a female pastor.

Students reported that Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) also led to unexpected learning.

> I did my Clinical Pastoral Education this summer in Mountain City. It wasn't exactly what I expected. I was expecting hard-core blood and guts. Instead, I was in the emergency room where they treat the baby who has strep throat. You had to go find ministry in the wards with patients who weren't in the emergency room. CPE was a positive experience. I had a good peer group and supervisor. I discerned that I'm not called to be a chaplain. I found that to be draining, as opposed to an energizing, work. I thought that I would learn about death and dying in CPE, but I ended up learning about my pastoral authority.

One second-career seminarian learned about congregational power struggles while working with a youth group.

> At a Korean church here, I worked with the youth group. But after a year I hit a wall. There are power games going on. I found out I became one of the issues for them to fight about at that church. I was fed up with all of the ugly stuff. But I was powerless there and couldn't do anything. That made me think, is that truly my way to answer the call?

Call to Ministry Clarified

Students reported that engaging in the Ministry Practicum helped them to clarify their sense of call.

> This summer was the best in my life. My Ministry Practicum confirmed that ministry is what I want to do. My call was my biggest question mark during seminary: Do I get a Ph.D.? Do I ever want to be in a church? I vacillate between "I love the church; I hate the church." Doing my Ministry Practicum, I've experienced the body of Christ. It's not without problems. People fight, but they fight fair. Ministry Practicum has solidified where I feel called.

One second-career student reported how the experience of providing pastoral care to a dying woman and her family during Ministry Practicum solidified her sense of being called to ministry.

> I sat at the bedside of a woman at Hospice House. I had been visiting her as a shut-in. I sat with her and her daughters. We watched this woman, whom I had come to adore despite her hard edges, take her last breath. At that moment, I physically felt the presence of God in the room. In the midst of hugging these women who were suffering so much because they were watching their mom die, I sensed the Holy Spirit's presence in a physically profound way. It meant "In life and in death we belong to Christ." I thought: It's all there for us! Yes! In life *and in death* we belong to Christ. That's why I held that dying woman's hand. I knew that God is with us, that Christ is with us. God has been leading me towards this thing that's my call. My Ministry Practicum has solidified my call.

Life Management (Outcome)

The interview protocol defined the affinity Life Management as a students' life outside of NCTS. Participants reported that responsibilities directly related to being in

seminary devoured most of their time. They spoke of the need for self-care. They talked about spouses and families. For both first- and second-career students, finding a balance between school obligations and other parts of life was a key to life management.

No Life Outside NCTS

Most participants reported that they had very little life outside of seminary. One reason was the time demands of engaging in school.

> There is no life outside NCTS. Time-wise, there's very little other time. I'm lucky because I don't have to worry about the family duties of raising a child. Most of my life has revolved around trying to live into the challenge of NCTS. I'm looking forward to getting out of here and having a little more variety again. Going to seminary takes up just about all my time.

Respondents, both first- and second-career, reported that most of their activities and relationships directly related to their lives as seminary students.

> Most of my life is here. I live here. I work here. And I study here. We don't study all day long, but relationally speaking, I don't have a life outside of the seminary. The church I go to is my Ministry Practicum church, so that's related to seminary. I work on campus. I don't have a job off of campus other than Ministry Practicum. All of my friends are here. I don't know people in town who aren't related to the seminary. For me it's OK. I have no life outside of seminary. When my spouse died, I basically retreated into the seminary in a lot of ways.

Value of Self-Care

Participants understood the value of taking care of themselves by engaging in activities off campus.

> In my first year, one of the seniors told me, "Be sure to have a life outside of seminary. Join a fellowship. Do something outside of the dorm." I've been going to a small Bible study with Asian people. That's really been therapeutic. It gets me away from the NCTS community. You're with the community constantly. In every single class you see the same people. It's crucial that you do something fun. You have your Sabbath. You go to the gym to escape. That advice has stuck with me. I've learned that I have to

> make time for play and relaxation. I go kayaking or see a movie so I can engage in something other than reading for classes. It keeps you sane.

One participant noted the challenge of self-care because of the demands of other family members:

> The person who gets the least amount of attention as far as doctor's appointments and haircuts is me. I live with three people with chronic illness. They need their doctor's appointments. I get the short end of the stick. I wish I got more exercise. I consider that a life mismanagement.

First-career students reported a variety of hobbies and leisure activities.

> I took ice skating lessons. I go to the gym to escape. I go to museums and hear live music. I enjoy kayaking or going to a movie. I've been going to a small Bible study of Asian people. That's really been therapeutic. It gets me away from the NCTS community. I have a passion for ashtanga yoga. I do that four or five times a week. I go out swing dancing quite a bit. This city has a wonderful Lindy-hop swing dancing scene. Love to hang out with friends. Watch some football.

One second-career student reported getting away to visit his adult children. "I go back home every chance I get and visit with our kids. Our oldest son lives in New Mexico. I like to go up there."

Spouses and Family

Married participants spoke about support received from spouses. Husbands said that they received support from their wives.

> I've been blessed with a wonderful wife who likes to do outdoorsy stuff. She gets me involved and brings me to a concert or a picnic outside, or camping and traveling. It's been great having the wife who'll help you to enjoy what else is here outside of the seminary experience.

> I'm blessed with a wife who wants to integrate her life with the seminary process. She's our sole income. She feels a burden. I would work, but she knows that would impact the learning process. We have to minister to each other.

Similarly, married female students spoke of supportive husbands.

> My spouse is a saint. He wouldn't proclaim himself a feminist, but he did all our laundry during my first year of seminary. He's taken off work when a kid got sick so I could go to a necessary class. Mom used to be the primary parent. We're both parents now.
>
> When I am finally called up to receive my diploma, I ought to haul my husband up with me because he's been fantastic. I could not do this without him.

One new father, a first-career student, spoke of the challenges he faced combining study with parenting small children.

> For me life management is critical because I'm married and a father. We weren't planning on having children during seminary but ended up having two kids. I try hard to make family first. Studies and classes come second. It's forced me to make changes. I have limited time to study. I've had to learn to say no to things. Physically, I can't do things I used to do. People ask you to go out after class, and I can't do that. I don't go to Student Forum anymore because I need to get home and help my wife with the kids. I've taken fewer classes these last two semesters so that I can spend more time with the family.

Other students also faced challenges in raising their children while engaging in the demands of seminary education.

> When the course schedule comes out, I choose the classes I have to take and make special arrangement for my kids based on those hours. If I can't make special arrangements, then I take a different elective. I do what I have to do. Homework usually gets done, but our first semester we ate horribly. It was pretty much take-out and deli-prepared food every night. My kids went for about a year and a half without dentist appointments. Some of those things just fell through the cracks, but we've picked those things up.

One second-career student, who was a mother, noted the benefit of raising children in an environment concerned with religious issues.

> My kids have theological discussions on the way to school. I had two little girls in my car. One of them said, "God's in control of everything." My daughter says, "I don't know if God's in control of everything, and this is why." I'm not even sure I'm here for me as much as I'm here for them.

A Matter of Balance

Participants stated that the key to life management was balancing the competing demands of self-care, church requirements, and academics. First-career students said:

> You need to learn how to balance. You need to see how you take care of yourself as well as take care of business. I know where my limits are and when I need to take a break, balancing, not procrastinating. It's tough to keep a balance because you do have so many other things to consider outside of seminary, like dealing with the things your church requires.

Second-career students spoke of rhythm and balance in life management.

> I try to confine the academic part of my life to Monday through Friday, nine to five. I want to keep weekends free for family, congregational life, and worship. Initially it was hard. Now we have a good rhythm.

> We don't have as many social activities outside the seminary as we used to. We try to have date night. It doesn't work out a lot of the time. Because of the demands of my education, my family and I are on somebody else's schedule. We've had to learn as a family to work within that life rhythm. We are all in seminary together.

> It's a balancing game. I work as an engineer. I work half time when I'm taking classes, but when NCTS is on break, I work 40 hours or more. I'm also a quarter-time pastor. My son is 30, daughter 28. I've also got a grandson. I try to do four hours outside of class for every class hour.

Transformation (Outcome)

In the interview protocol, the affinity Transformation was defined as the changes that students may undergo during seminary. Participants reported a variety of changes. They acquired new theological ideas and practical skills. They experienced personal growth. Their sense of call changed, sometimes being confirmed and sometimes being pushed into a previously unimagined direction. Participants stressed the need to be open to change during seminary education. Participants also stated that God and other people were involved in their transformation.

Theological Knowledge as Transformative

Students reported that their seminary experience changed their understanding of Christian doctrines and the Bible.

> When I started, I thought that my theology, my view, was the way to do things. But my theology was weak. If I got into a conversation with another seminary student, their ability to debate would blow my mind. I got burned the first couple of times. Being in this Presbyterian environment has caused me to become more knowledgeable about my personal theological beliefs. Since the semester that the notion of theodicy was introduced, I've been struggling with it spiritually. I wasn't ignorant of the fact that there was evil, but now I'm trying to figure out why evil exists and what we can do to fight it. There's a lot of transformation in our understanding of doctrines. Growing up, I'd had a literal interpretation of scripture. What does that do to your theology of scripture when you discover that a story in the Bible is a Paul Bunyan type of story? Whoa! Can the Bible still have authority if the Flood, or Adam and Eve, or any other Old Testament or New Testament story did not really happen? It's still scripture and it still has something to say to us. I had changes every semester and day almost. The setting and people shaped me into learning new things. All the classes made sense. Sometimes I contributed my view from the perspective of a woman who is not an American, and the professors would agree with me.

Some students vigorously engaged new material but did not change their own theological positions. "I've seen people who were really challenged by a particular idea and went after it to understand to discover what it was that they didn't agree with. Even if their original position didn't change, they engaged the idea that had challenged them." By contrast, one participant reported that the new ideas learned at NCTS made little impact on him. "I got new information, but in regard to spiritual transformation or transformation in character, none of that has come through the academic program. I'm just reading, writing essays, and taking tests."

Chapel Worship as Transformative

Some first-career participants reported that worship in the seminary chapel was transformative in positive ways.

> I'd never seen worship the way that it is done at seminary. It was a big step to see something that wasn't contemporary music and then preaching. Pentecostals always have this way of being in your face, worshipping God, and going crazy. In worship class, we wrote papers about the worship experience in chapel. I started letting go of my pride. There's this serene, calm, peaceful feeling about the chapel. There's a lot to be said for just sitting quietly waiting on God. In seminary worship, you can be calm. It's not all about the music, the lights, and the glamour. It's simple. But there needs to be a balance. I didn't have that balance. I've grown so much because God called me to NCTS instead of Gordon Conwell. There has been a lot of transformation to my notions of how church should be done. I had grown up in the same congregation my whole life. Not knowing anything else, I thought that what we did in church was what all Presbyterians did. I came here and discovered, wow, there's liturgy. This is cool. I like this.

Acquisition of Professional Skills

> Participants reported that attending NCTS gave them new pastoral skills.
>
> My biggest transformation happened when I took my Clinical Pastoral Education. It was intense and rough at times. I grew tremendously in how to minister to people in hospitals, in crisis, and in tough situations. I learned to read scripture, pray, and be present with them. I learned how big presence is. I got a better grasp of how I sometimes fail. I learned how to be more pastoral. I've grown into the idea of pastoral authority. In my senior year, the process of transformation is moving into the practical areas. The pastoral care classes I've taken have changed me. Now, I feel if someone wants to talk, they have something they want me to hear. I want to make sure that I hear it.

Other participants reported acquiring other new skills for ministry. "I haven't changed that much, but I've gained the tools. I've learned new techniques, becoming familiar with the *Book of Order* and the *Book of Confessions*. Seminary education gives you a pretty good dose of reality about the church."

Perception of Call Transformed

Participants reported that attending seminary changed their understanding of their call to ministry. In some cases, the changed understanding was a clarification or affirmation.

> My path has become more solidified and affirmed here. My church process has not been the most positive, so when I came here I felt alone. I was immediately affirmed by everyone. That was a transformation, seeing myself as confidently being on the path to becoming a pastor. I was going around saying to God: "Me a minister? I don't think we're on the right track here. You surely must be making a mistake." I've come to live into that calling.

For others, attending seminary led to understanding call in open-ended ways or previously unimagined avenues of service.

> You come to NCTS believing you're called. But many of us have doubts and questions. You learn to embrace the question as something formative for your call. The feeling "I'm not pastoral-care-oriented" teaches you that your particular call may not be in that realm but doesn't negate your call to ministry. You embrace doubt and challenge in a new way. That becomes a shaping and a molding. That's been my greatest transformation.

> After completing my undergraduate degree, I vowed I would never go back to school. Now I love it and am considering going on for a Ph.D. I had to prove to myself that I could do this and that this is truly a call. I believe that God has called me to a purpose. However I function, I do not want to disappoint God, even though I don't yet know where I'm going and what I'll do.

Personal Growth

In addition to growth in knowledge, professional skills, and sense of call, participants reported that attending seminary led to personal growth in ways not directly related to learning outcomes of the academic program.

> In the required pastoral care class I began to realize that I had a problem with my listening. I became a better listener. I'm a lot calmer now. In Clinical Pastoral Education, you would write a verbatim of an encounter

> you had with a patient in the hospital and discuss it with other student chaplains. You'd see your weaknesses. It was tough at times. CPE helped me to be a more complete person.

Some students reported significant changes in their self-understanding.

> I received my acceptance and self-worth not from God but from those around me. If you get your acceptance from others in seminary, then you will have problems when you work in the church. That needed to be changed. A counselor and spiritual director guided me through those things.

> A young student was helping me with Greek. I was really struggling. She said to me, "You suck!" So help me, she was right! I had spent a lot of time trying never to feel shame. I failed miserably at the biblical languages. I had never failed before. I had pride that if I applied myself, I could always succeed. I had put every effort into the work and I had failed. That was transformational for me: to fail, and yet not be a failure.

Other students reported changes in intimate relationships.

> The biggest change for me is that I've developed a relationship with my mom since I've been in seminary. My grandmother was dying of cancer. My mom started having God questions. Suddenly we could talk about things. Up until that point, she didn't want to hear about faith, and I didn't want to hear about everything sad. So we didn't really talk. But now we have. I've been out to visit her. I became a daughter since I came to seminary.

> Getting married half-way through my seminary career was a huge transformation for me. Getting married affected most of my spiritual transformation.

Need for Openness

Several first-career students stated that a condition of transformation was persistent openness to growth and change.

> Seminary is a time for you to grow and transform as an individual, to learn what works for you and what doesn't work. When you give it a chance, there is a difference. The more you embrace an idea that challenges you, the more you can allow change to happen. It may result in a solidification of who you are. Or maybe a new creation of who you are. Nicky had academic and theological challenges. He sat in the front row in every

> class. He didn't give up or go away. He showed up. Our professors and other students were willing to engage him. And it changed him.

One participant had been alerted in advance that seminary education would severely challenge her existing ideas.

> One of my pastors at my college church and I had long conversations about what seminary was like, how it's not church camp. I was warned to be open and not to expect anything out of seminary other than going and experiencing it. I was told to be there and not hold on so tight that I didn't let it move me and affect me. You need a willingness to be open. You need not to be scared of new ideas, even if they felt counter-intuitive or opposite of what you thought and believed up to this point.

At the same time, according to participants, refusal to be open to new ideas leads to minimal or no change.

> We as individuals have a lot to say about our transformation at seminary, and whether we're willing to or not willing to change. The students who have transformed the most are the ones who were the most willing to transform. There are a couple of people that haven't transformed at all. They came in with their theology and worldview and weren't willing to change them. They listened to other people, but they weren't willing to let other viewpoints affect them.

One such participant candidly reported:

> Some people come to seminary with a very defined faith. They get a bunch of stuff thrown at them and come out with different ways of thinking. The opposite has happened for me. People were throwing all of these ideas at me. I did my best to discern, "I'll take that. I won't take that. That's not accurate; I'm not going to buy that. I do buy that; I'll take that and piece it together." So I'm walking out of here with a very similar paradigm to what I came in with.

One second-career student also spoke about the need for openness to change. "Part of my transformation in seminary is seeing the image of Christ in myself. It's hard. I'm not good at taking the time to sit with God so that God can transform me into that image."

People Support Transformation

Participants reported that supportive relationships at seminary assisted their transformation.

> I moved twenty-five hundred miles away. I felt out on an island. I was separated from my church. I got here and immediately was affirmed by students and staff and the faculty. They said that I belonged here. That was a transformation, seeing myself as confidently being on the path to becoming a pastor.

> I love my country's culture, but we have to change one thing: free people to think freely. In the church back home, we fit people into a box. When I came back from my mission work, I realized that I could not fit in any accepted category. I struggled for three years, not allowed to be myself. I wanted to escape from that oppression. This seminary helped me to be healed. No matter what I did, everyone was encouraging and said I was doing a good job. And I believed it!

God Transforms

Study participants, both first- and second-career, reported that God was involved in the changes that they experienced.

> I've seen people transformed by this place. Those who embraced the challenge have been grabbed by the Spirit. Coming to Christ at 19 and baptism of the Holy Spirit at 30 are my two major times of spiritually getting flipped upside down. The majority of transformation in my life has come from strong encounters with God or suffering. The seminary answer about the source of transformation is the Holy Spirit. My answer is the Holy Spirit, but also willingness to be open to new ideas. It's hard to take the time to be with God so that God can transform you into the image of Christ. It's you and God doing it together. In fact, it's not you. God does it.

Emotions (Outcome)

The interview protocol defined the affinity Emotions as the feelings of students in school. Students reported a wide range of emotions, ranging from positive emotions to frustration. First-career students described emotions as a roller coaster. Three second-

career students spoke of emotional difficulties while in school, such as the loss of a spouse.

Positive Emotions

Students reported many positive emotions.

> Most often, my emotions are happy and joyful. I love getting together and hanging out with a group of friends. I don't know if meaningful is an emotion, but a lot of the experiences I've had were meaningful. I've never been in a minority position before. That caused me anxiety, but I was given acceptance here. My greatest emotion is blessing. The school blesses us with resources and opportunity that we won't find anywhere else. Overall, it's delightful. It is intellectually stimulating to learn all these new things. It's been a rewarding experience.

Some students contrasted the demands of seminary with previous work or other aspects of life.

> I spent time in the military before coming to seminary. I had setbacks in business. I've been through some pretty rough waters, compared to maybe some other students. So I don't sweat things like writing an essay. I have complete peace in regard to academics, grades, and assignments. I have learned over the years that if you seek Jesus Christ, if you seek the Kingdom first, everything else is taken care of. It's been a rewarding experience and a great opportunity to come and carve out some time solely for study. That goes away when you get in the real world.

Stress and Frustration

Students frequently reported stress and frustration. Some frustration was because of workload and academic performance.

> I started classes and was overwhelmed by that. Is tired an emotion? The first year, I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. I was physically, emotionally, intellectually drained. People cry. I tell the juniors, "Everyone cries. It's okay." During finals, I don't come on campus as much, because people are all stressed out. There's stress because your academic work is due all at once.

Some students experienced frustration because of grades received.

> In my first semester, I was frustrated because I got a "C" on an exam. I went to the professor to explain that I got that grade because of one timeline question. The professor said, "You make a good point, but I'm still not changing the grade." You hear all the time that this school is so grace-filled. I hadn't experienced too much grace. When I attended another seminary, my grade point average was 3.9. Granted it was an extension campus, but here I can't do any better than a "B+." Why is there such a difference in the grading system, especially when you accept the grades from the other institution? I'm doing the same level of work in it, but here I can't get an "A" in anything.

According to participants, frustration was also caused by other aspects of seminary life.

> Making a transition from a Pentecostal-affiliated school to a Presbyterian school was hard. I was frustrated because of the differences in beliefs, let alone coming from the East Coast out here. Suddenly, I'm 2,000 miles away from home. I don't even know how to get to a grocery store. I've been frustrated at times about the cost of school and trying to make sure that my wife is happy. There's frustration because you're dealing with a bureaucracy on the school side.

Roller Coaster/Tides of Emotion

First-career students experienced a volatile range of emotions, which they described as a roller coaster or tide.

> My emotions were up and down, especially my first year. Emotions are a roller coaster—maybe not so much a roller coaster as a tide. Emotions feed off one another. There are times in the semester when everybody feels free and happy to get back to classes. Then you start diving into the books and it grinds and grinds. The emotions you feel depend upon what time it is in the semester. Going into my last year, I'm anxious to see what's to come, excited, and a little worried about how it's all going to play out receiving my first call. It's a tide of emotions. Emotions here go in waves.

Extreme Cases

Three second-career students in the study had especially difficult times emotionally. One struggled with mourning the loss of her spouse.

> Right after I came here, I was in deep grief and a lot of guilt because of my husband's death. I did everything to blame myself, and my emotions were really raw. I was in a very deep hole. I retreated into seminary work. It was quite a rough ride. If I had any idea what I would go through, I would not have done it. But I'm making it through.

Another student took a leave of absence because of a combination of the stress of academic work and concern about his son, a soldier in Afghanistan.

> When I got here, I didn't think I was capable of handling the academic work. That was chewing on me pretty good. At the start of my second year, things were coming at me all the time. I had four or five things due on the same day. About that time, our youngest son, who was in the service, got sent to Afghanistan. He went through a divorce while he was there. Things got on top of me so bad, I had to drop my classes and leave. I couldn't stand it. Everything worked out very well for my son. He got through his combat experience without a scratch. He's remarried now and has two little girls. When I left, I had no intention of ever coming back to seminary. When I got home, I was asked to preach. I knew when I came out of the pulpit one Sunday that I was going to come back down here. I've been a lot more solid since I've been back. I've done fine.

A third second-career student reported that working on the psychological issues of family of origin and self-worth was an important part of her seminary experience.

> I'm in a master's program, but the Ph.D. work of seminary is self-reflection and coming face to face with my family-of-origin issues and other issues. If I vomited them all over the church, I would be in trouble. I didn't expect an emotional aspect to accompany seminary education. I've felt insecurities and the stress of going to school again. There is anxiety around finals and trying to determine if your self-worth is tied up in your grades. As a result, I take everything I can pass/fail. For me, that's a spiritual discipline. I work just as hard in classes that I take pass/fail as I do in classes that I take for a grade, but I want to get what I'm supposed to get out of a class, period.

Themes of the Seminary Experience: Summary

Previous sections provided detailed examples of the actual words reported by participants to describe the 12 key themes of their seminary experience. Table 22 summarizes the themes and sub-themes, noting sub-themes specific only to one constituency or the other. Out of a total of 68 sub-themes, two sub-themes were limited to a single constituency. Only first-career students commented on learning technology under the theme Facilities. The three examples of students that stated they underwent serious emotional strain while in seminary all belonged to the second-career constituency. In the vast majority of cases, students from both constituencies commented on sub-themes. For instance, both first- and second-career students reported slowly developing calls as well as sudden calls under the affinity Call to Ministry. Members of both constituencies noted the value of self-care under the affinity Life Management. This major section has reported the themes of student experience in their own words. Chapter five will interpret these themes and discuss motifs that appear in student discourse across affinities.

Table 22
Themes and Sub-Themes of the Seminary Experience

Affinity/Theme	Sub-Themes	
Church requirements	Hoops	Presbyterian ordination examinations
	Church requirements as valuable	Oversight committees
Faculty and staff	Faculty as supportive	Other staff as competent
	Faculty as instructors	Other staff as supportive
	Faculty as advisors	
School bureaucracy	School bureaucracy as efficient	Registration and scheduling
	The personal touch	Communication problems
	Admissions and financial aid	Concerns about housing policies
Facilities	Campus setting	Student housing
	Classrooms	Technology (first-career only)
	Library	
Academic program	Cohesive curriculum	Focus on learning
	Academic program as challenging	Serendipity learning outside of classroom
	Academic program as practical	Transitions from college and previous careers
	Demanding workload	Perspectives of non-Presbyterians
	Teaching techniques	
Community	Community as a core value	Student groups promoting community
	NCTS as welcoming school	Conflicts between students
	Need for engagement	Student families and community
Spirituality	Chapel worship	God in nature
	Group practices of spirituality	Distinctive spiritual experiences
	Individual practices of spirituality	Sensing God's presence
	Time constraints and discipline	
Call to ministry	Intuition of the divine	Affirmation by others
	Slowly developing calls	Sexism (second-career only)
	Sudden calls	Changes in understanding of call
Ministry	Importance of fit	New discoveries
	Variety of ministry tasks	Call to ministry clarified
	Experiential learning	
Life Management	No life outside NCTS	Spouses and family
	Value of self-care	Need for balance
Transformation	Theological knowledge	Need for openness
	Professional knowledge	People support transformation
	Perception of call	God
	Personal growth	
Emotions	Positive emotions	Roller coaster of emotions
	Frustration	Extreme cases (second-career only)

Comparing Mindmaps

Using the theoretical codes provided by participants, the researcher produced a group mindmap for each constituency. The mindmap for first-career students used 16 sets of theoretical codes. The mindmap for second-career students used 21 sets of codes. In each case, the researcher set the cutoff point for the proportion of relationships at 80 percent. In each case, this cutoff point achieved maximum power in the system, meeting IQA standards for the robustness (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) as described in detail in Appendix C. This section provides an overview of the two group mindmaps by displaying the System Influence Diagram (SID) for each system and commenting on the general shape, or flow of influences among affinities, of each system. Thus, this section's data address how first- and second-career seminarians relate the themes of their seminary experience into a system of thought (research question 1) and how the systems of thought described by the two constituencies compare (research question 2).The next major section reports student discourse about how they understood the flow or interplay between affinities.

First-Career Seminarians: Mindmap

In IQA terms, the mindmap represents the way that a typical member of a constituency understands her or his seminary experience. Figure 2 shows the mindmap for a representative first-career seminarian. Figure 2 shows the affinities Church Requirements, School Bureaucracy, Faculty and Staff, and Facilities situated in the *driver zone* of the system (the upper left part of the figure). This means that these four

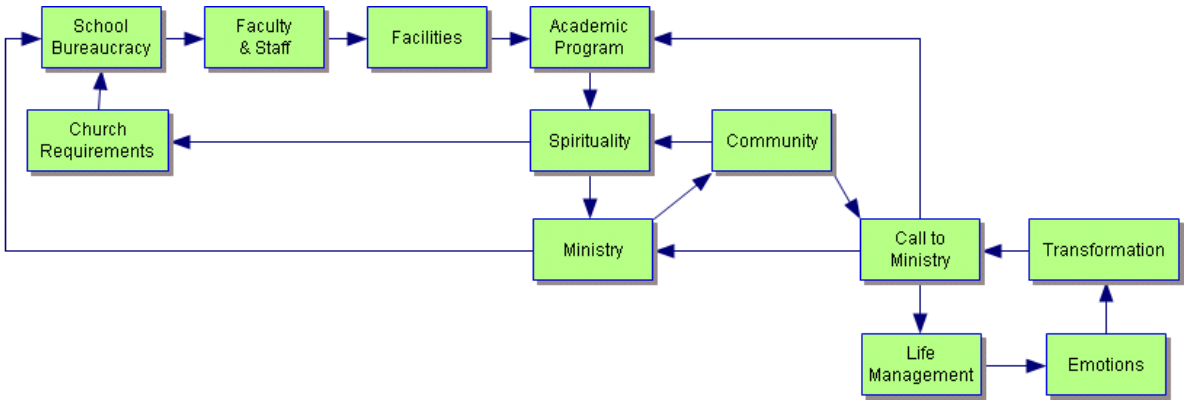

Figure 2

System Influence Diagram, First-Career Seminarians

affinities exert influence over many other elements in the system. In the *outcome zone* are the affinities Call to Ministry, Life Management, Emotions, and Transformation (lower right of the figure). These four affinities are influenced by multiple affinities and influence relatively few affinities. Situated in the middle of the system are the remaining affinities, or *mid-system elements.* In other words, the affinities Academic Program, Spirituality, Community, and Ministry influence some affinities but are also influenced by other affinities. This system contains elements of recursion. For example, the outcome Call to Ministry exerts influence on Academic Program in the mid-system zone. The outcome Call to Ministry also exerts influence on Ministry, and this affinity exerts influence on the driver School Bureaucracy. The mid-system element Spirituality exerts influence on the driver Church Requirements. The mid-system element Community is part of two feedback loops, Community/Spirituality/Ministry and Community/Call to Ministry/Ministry.

Second-Career Seminarians: Mindmap

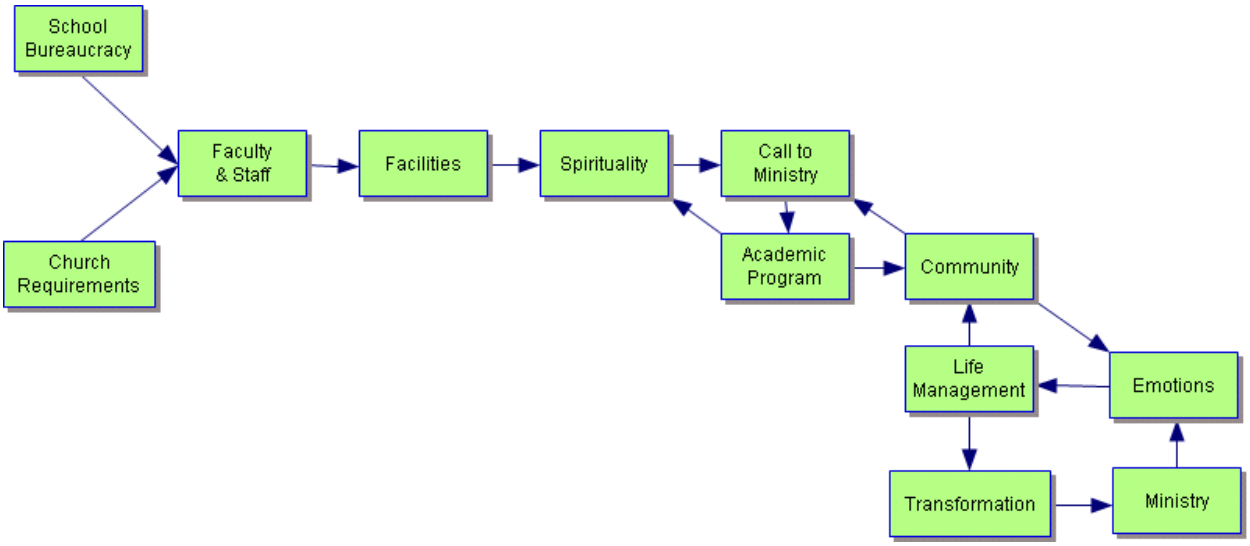

Figure 3

System Influence Diagram, Second-Career Seminarians

Figure 3 displays the System Influence Diagram (SID) for typical second-career seminarians. In this system, the primary drivers are School Bureaucracy, Church Requirements, Faculty and Staff, and Facilities (upper left of the diagram). These drivers exert influence on many other parts of the system. The primary outcomes for the system are Life Management, Transformation, Ministry, and Emotions (lower right of the diagram). These elements are affected by many other elements in the system and exert influence on relatively few others. Situated in the middle of the system are other affinities, including Spirituality, Call to Ministry, Academic Program, and Community.

These affinities exert influence on some affinities and are themselves affected by other affinities.

Like the SID generated for first-career students, the second-career system contains some elements of recursion. For example, the flow of influence from the outcome Life Management influences Community, which in turn influences Call to Ministry. There are feedback loops formed by the mid-system elements Academic Program, Spirituality, and Call to Ministry. Similarly, Call to Ministry is part of a loop along with Academic Program and Community. In the outcome zone of the system there is a loop formed by Emotions, Life Management, Transformation, and Ministry.

Inter-Systemic Comparison: Shape And Recursion

The SIDs for both systems have the same general shape. To aid interpretation, the two systems are shown in parallel in Figure 4. Table 23 reports the affinities for both constituencies, categorized as drivers, mid-system elements, and outcomes. In both systems, the driver elements begin with Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy. In both systems, Emotions, Life Management, and Transformation are outcomes. While the specific pattern of influence between the mid-system elements varies, the affinities Spirituality, Academic Program, and Community are present in both systems. In the first-career mindmap, Call to Ministry is an outcome and Ministry is a mid-system element. In the second-career mindmap, Call to Ministry is situated in the middle of the system and Ministry is an outcome.

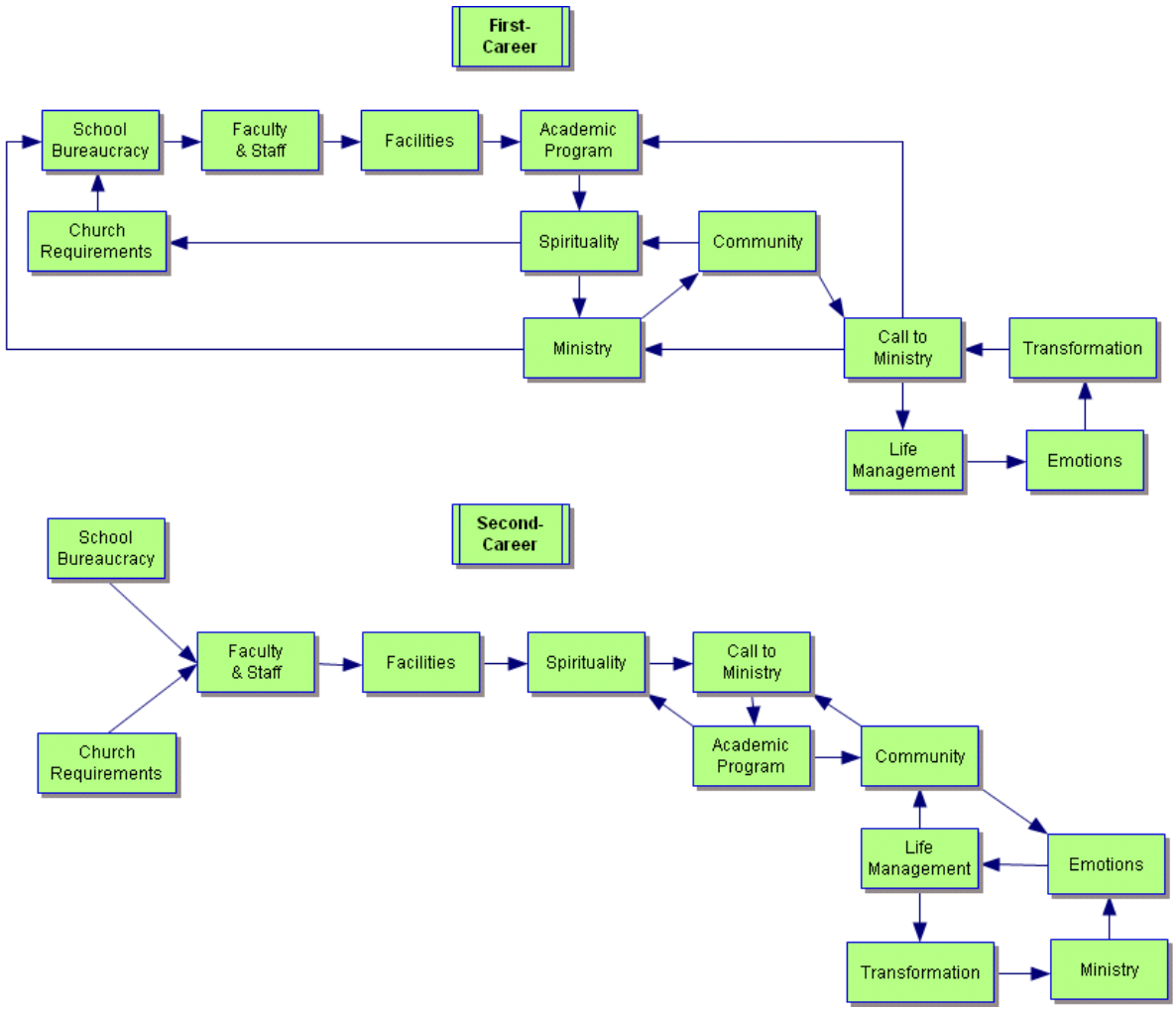

Figure 4
First- and Second-Career Mindmaps in Parallel

Table 23 *Affinities in Group Mindmaps, By Position in System*

	Drivers	Mid-System Element	Outcome
First-Career	Church Requirements	Academic Program	Call to Ministry*
	School Bureaucracy	Spirituality	Life Management
	Faculty and Staff	Community	Emotions
	Facilities	Ministry*	Transformation
Second-Career	Church Requirements	Spirituality	Life Management
	School Bureaucracy	Call to Ministry*	Transformation
	Faculty and Staff	Academic Program	Ministry*
	Facilities	Community	Emotions

*Affinities which are mid-system elements for one constituency but outcomes for the other.

While both mindmaps have the same general shape, they differ in the amount of recursion present in the two systems. In the first-career mindmap, a path of influence extends backwards in the system from Ministry (a mid-system element) to the driver School Bureaucracy. Similarly, a line of recursion leads from Spirituality to the driver Church Requirements. In the second-career system, there is no such recursion from mid-system elements to drivers. In the first-career system, it is possible to trace a pattern of influence down the system from the primary driver Church Requirements to the outcomes of the system, and then to make a return path from the outcome Transformation to Call to Ministry back to the driver zone. By contrast, in the second-career system, it is possible to return from the outcomes of the system as far as Spirituality, a mid-system element. While there are several elements of recursion in both systems (e.g., the affinity Community functions as a kind of hub or distribution point in bot systems), there are more elements of recursion in the first-career system. Chapter five will explore the possible meanings of the differences between the two mindmaps.

This section reported the mindmaps for typical representatives of the first- and second-career constituencies at New Creation Theological Seminary. Both mindmaps have the same overall shape. The next major section provides detail to this general observation by reporting, in the words of participants themselves, how they experienced seminary life.

Conceptual Worlds at Work: Flows of Influence

So far, this chapter has presented an overview of the group mindmaps of first- and second-career students at NCTS and has reported student discourse about the themes that

comprise their life worlds. This section reports how students understood the flows of influence or interplay between affinities. This section, then, addresses the second research question of this study, how do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?

All participants who provided theoretical codes expressed their viewpoints about the direction of influence between the 12 affinities via pair-wise comparisons. The group mindmaps (Figure 4) depict those relationships. The 17 participants who gave full interviews also gave verbal examples of how these influences work. This section reports the words of students themselves, combined into block quotations. As in the previous section, the results are reported in rough systemic order, beginning with drivers and ending with outcomes. The uncluttered System Influence Diagrams remove many links between affinities in order to emphasize the gestalt, or overall shape, of the system. For a fuller explanation, see Appendix C. To aid the reader, variations of the cluttered SID (i.e., a SID containing many links) are used to emphasize the linkage being discussed in this section. In these diagrams, thickened lines draw attention to the flow of influence under discussion.

Church Requirements (Driver)

Study participants placed Church Requirements in the driver position of each system. As a driver, Church Requirements influenced many other affinities, but was influenced by relatively few. This section reports examples of the influence that Church Requirements exerted on the affinities Academic Program and Call to Ministry (Figure 5).

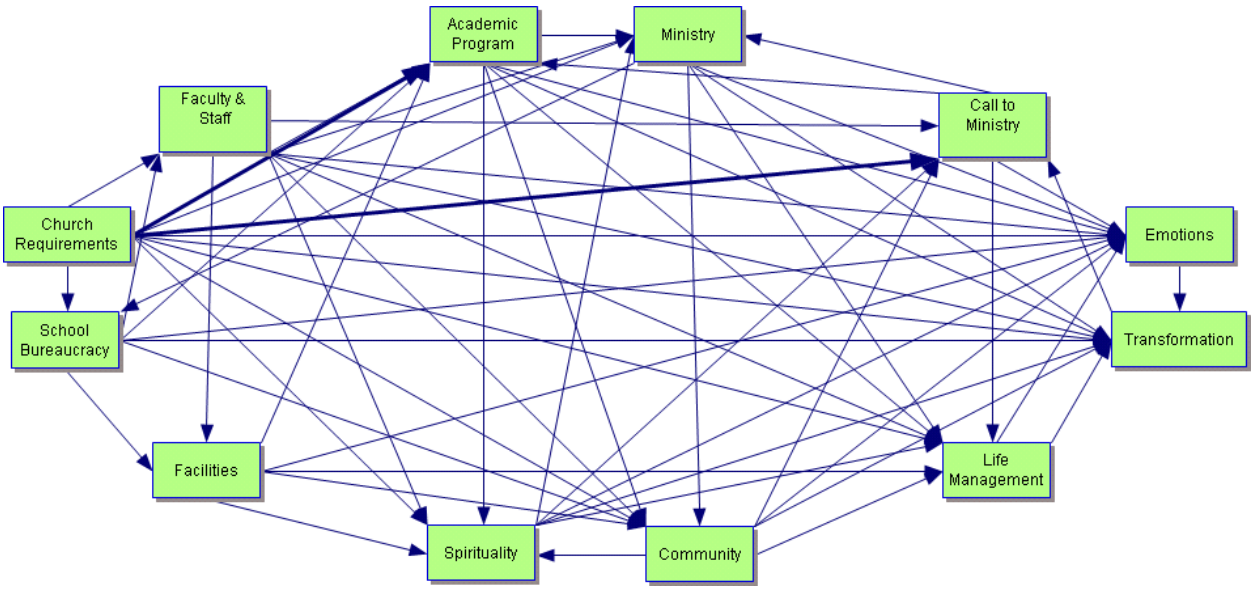

Figure 5

Church Requirements Influencing Academic Program and Call to Ministry

Church Requirements Influence Academic Program

In both systems, the affinity Church Requirements was a driver, influencing many other elements in the system. First-career participants said that Church Requirements influenced the Academic Program:

> The Presbyterian Church requires things to be offered at its seminaries. That puts a heavy influence on the program that the seminary will formulate. The academic program caters to some of the church requirements that we need. My church committee is always checking up on my academics. The timeline might not always match up between church and academics, and my church committee says whether or not I get ordained.

Second-career participants agreed. They said: "This is a Presbyterian seminary. The requirements of the PCUSA have to influence the academic program of all its seminaries."

Church Requirements Influence Call to Ministry

First-career participants also reported that Church Requirements influenced Call to Ministry: "Sometimes someone feels called to ministry, but they can't get past some church requirement. We feel called to something and our church committee might say, 'why don't you take an extra CPE; we think you'd be good at that.'" Second-career students also stated that Church Requirements influenced Call to Ministry: "Church requirements govern the length of your internship. My experiences with the district committee on ministry and the sexism I experienced made me call into question my call."

School Bureaucracy (Driver)

Study participants placed the affinity School Bureaucracy in the driver position of each system. As a driver, School Bureaucracy influenced many other affinities but was influenced by relatively few. This section reports examples of the influence that this affinity exerted on the affinities Academic Program and Community (Figure 6).

School Bureaucracy Influences Academic Program

Participants construed this affinity to refer to the administrative staff of NCTS, not simply to their experience of policies or procedures. For both first- and second-career participants in this study, the affinity School Bureaucracy was highly influential.

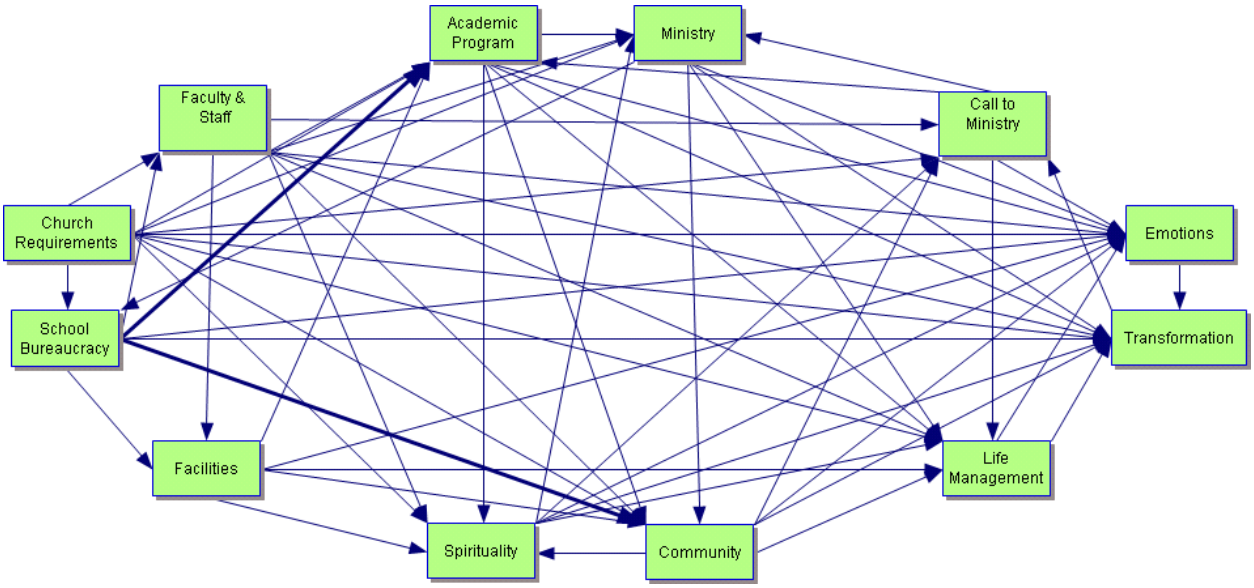

Figure 6

School Bureaucracy Influencing Academic Program and Community

School Bureaucracy influenced the Academic Program:

> The bureaucracy sets the goals and the tone for our program. The curriculum review and new M.Div. curriculum is a top-down decision, coming from the bureaucracy. The higher-ups decide which professors are hired. That influences the curriculum. From having been on two committees, academic program and admissions, I think that the academic program committee influenced academics. And in the admissions committee, there has been pressure to admit students even when there are concerns about success. Classes are clumped on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon because that's when everyone wants to teach. So you have to make choices because a lot of the classes that you want to take are held at the same time.

School Bureaucracy Influences Community

> School Bureaucracy also influenced Community. First-career students said:
>
> We used to have a student who was homosexual and wasn't allowed to live in the apartments because it was against the housing policy. The bureaucracy impacted the community. When the school decided to put the new construction right in the middle of everybody, it put a big ravine in

> the community. When students get frustrated with the school bureaucracy, we talk about it in community.

Second-career students said:

> Community needs guidance and direction. The NCTS bureaucracy sets good standards and provides good opportunities for community. The bureaucracy is a positive influence. The building of Scholars Hall has been difficult for those of us who have to live here. The angst of living in a construction zone made us bond. The bureaucracy sets the class schedule. That limits opportunities for when community can be built.

Faculty and Staff (Driver)

Study participants placed the affinity Faculty and Staff in the driver position of each system. As a driver, Faculty and Staff influenced many other affinities but was

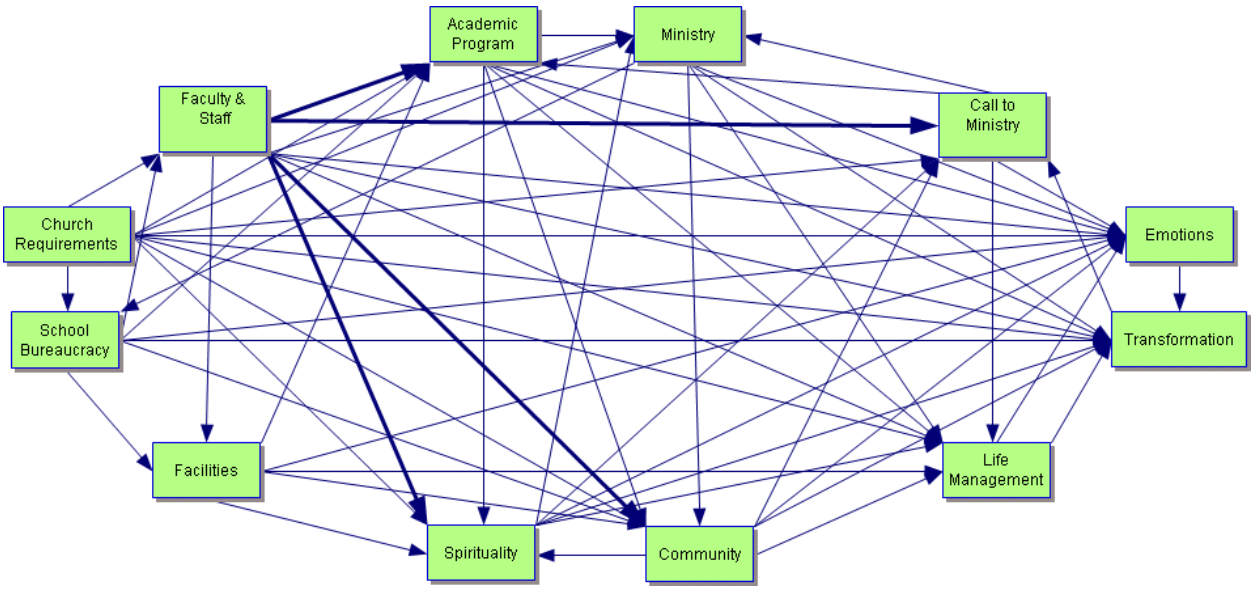

Figure 7

Faculty and Staff Influencing Academic Program, Community, Spirituality, and Call to Ministry

influenced by relatively few. This section reports examples of the influence that this affinity exerted on the affinities Academic Program, Community, Spirituality, and Call to Ministry (Figure 7).

Faculty and Staff Influence Academic Program

In both systems, the affinity Faculty and Staff was a driver, influencing many other elements in the system. First-career students reported that the faculty influenced the Academic Program:

> The faculty make the program what it is. The faculty has direct control over the curriculum and the books they choose to use. Faculty can influence what kind of classes they want to teach and have a lot to say about individual lectures. There is a great academic programming committee. The faculty meet with students, and we can talk about the program, what we need out of it, and what we want to get rid of.

Second-career students said: "The faculty brings a level of integrity, challenge, and Christian life that enhances the courses they teach. A top faculty enhances the content of a course."

Faculty and Staff Influence Community

Participants reported that Faculty and Staff influenced Community. First-career students said:

> Students appreciate when faculty and staff are around and the whole community is enriched. Professor Nathaniel Calbillo plays flag football as part of our team. When faculty and staff show up at Student Forum, students are happy to see them there. Then they become part of the community.

Second-career students said: "Faculty's leadership sets a good, healthy tone for the community."

Faculty and Staff Influence Spirituality

Participants also reported that Faculty and Staff influenced Spirituality. For students in both constituencies, the influence was often positive:

> The faculty opens you up to a larger variety of spiritual opportunities. Taking Noah Cartwright's spirituality class and others encourages you to engage in spiritual exercises throughout the semester. In Thelma Saddler's theology class in the first semester, I would have to remind myself that it was not church and that there would be a test. You could get so engrossed in what she was saying that you would discover you weren't taking notes.

One second-career participant related how working on an assignment for Thelma Saddler was a profound spiritual experience:

> What the faculty teaches is very spiritual. When I did my Christology paper for Professor Saddler, it sent me for long walks in the woods, weeping. There was a point when I was weeping in the woods, very upset that I had to do this assignment about Christology due. I was supposed to write about the person and work of Jesus Christ and figure out what salvation meant. That's big stuff! It was challenging, and I didn't understand it. That made me really uncomfortable. As I was weeping in the middle of the woods, a gush of wind came through. Leaves started floating down. The trees are weeping with me. That's what I saw. If God's creation is going to weep with me, in the middle of trying to figure out who Christ is, then it's going to be okay.

Faculty and Staff Influence Call to Ministry

Participants from both constituencies reported that Faculty and Staff influenced their Call to Ministry. First-career seminarians said:

> Faculty and staff influenced my call to the ministry. They reconfirmed it. My advisor worked with me to help discern my call, whether it was parish ministry or hospital chaplaincy. The faculty have been supportive, listening to my crazy ideas. Simply hearing Professor Nestor Cashwell speak enthusiastically about his field influenced my feeling of call.

Second-career seminarians said:

> The faculty challenged me. Because of the faculty, I questioned whether or not I should go for a Ph.D. Raising that possibility made me question a

> lot of things that I needed to think about. As a result, I had a deeper discernment of my call. They had a big influence on what I was thinking. I leaned heavily on the experience and relationships with faculty and staff to shape my call to ministry. It was a form of mentoring.

Facilities (Driver)

Participants in both constituencies reported that the affinity Facilities was a relative driver in the system. As a driver, Facilities exerted influence on many other affinities, and few affinities exerted influence on Facilities. This section reports examples of the influence that Facilities exerted on Spirituality and Community (Figure 8).

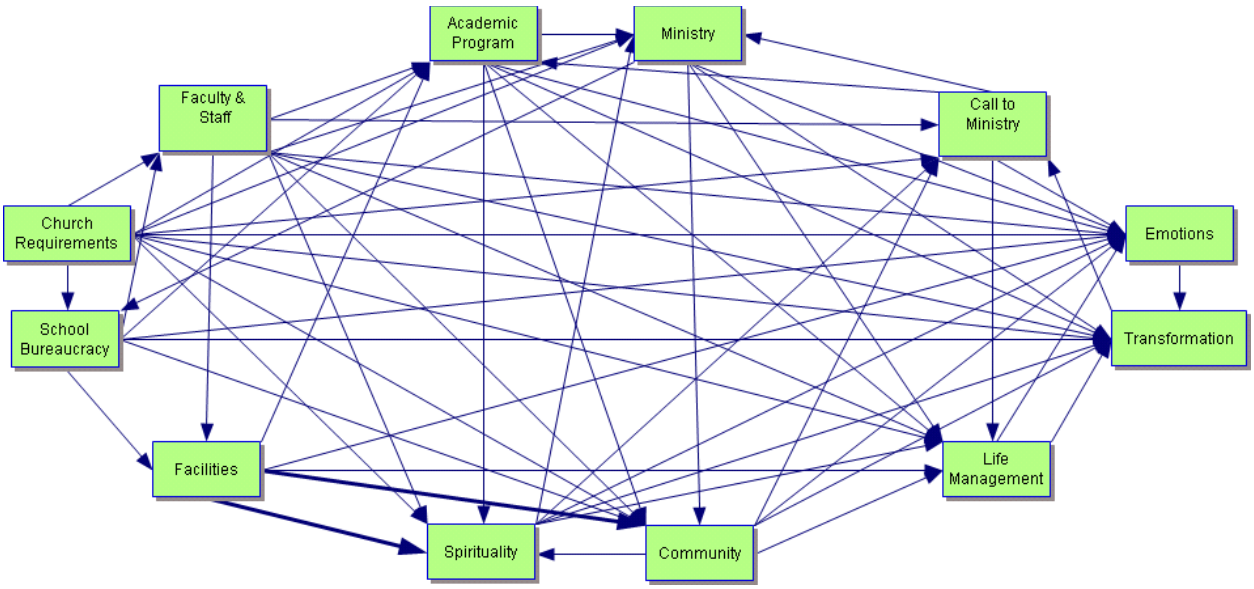

Figure 8

Facilities Influencing Spirituality and Community

Facilities Influences Spirituality

Students reported that Facilities influenced Spirituality. Students had differing opinions about the chapel of NCTS. "I'm a fan of our chapel. It's a positive for my spirituality." Another said, "I was never able to feel the presence of God in the chapel." Students also said:

> I'm here all the time. I can't go home to a different place and escape. The park-like atmosphere of campus is positive for my spirituality. The campus offers the space for spiritual direction or other experiences. Being here, living in the community, has allowed me to take more time. I don't have to commute for an hour, so time for my spirituality is a little more accessible.

Facilities Influences Community

Students also reported that Facilities influenced Community.

> There wasn't a sense of community at the apartments, but there is in the dorm because there is a space provided for it. We have the lounge and community areas. The construction fence for Scholars Hall affected community. Our chapel isn't big enough for our whole student body to be present, so for big events some people are in Calvin Hall, and some are in the chapel. The difference between upkeep on both sides of campus shows that students aren't as valued.

Academic Program (Mid-System)

Study participants placed the affinity Academic Program roughly in the middle of the system. As a mid-system element, Academic Program exerted influence on some other affinities and was influenced by others. Earlier in this chapter, participants reported examples of how Academic Program was influenced by Church Requirements, Faculty and Staff, and School Bureaucracy. This section reports examples of the influence that Academic Program exerted on the affinities Community and Transformation (Figure 9).

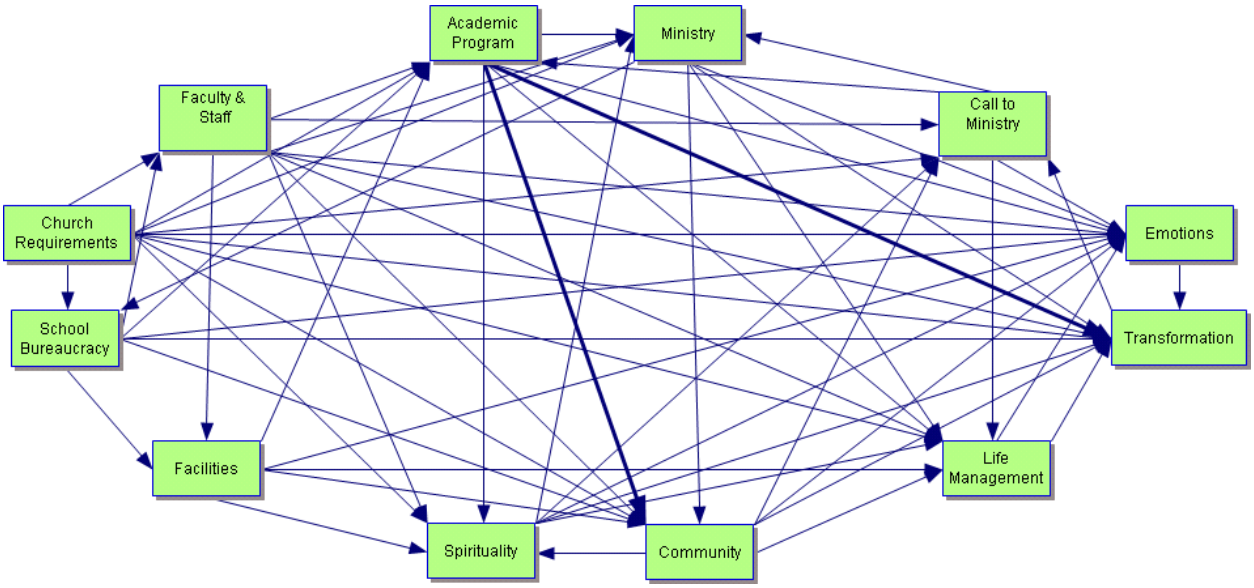

Figure 9

Academic Program Influencing Community and Transformation

Academic Program Influences Community

Students in both constituencies reported that Academic Program influenced student relationships, or Community. They wrote that Academic Program promoted relationships:

> The first year that you are taking classes, you are together with a certain group of people. You get a sense of connection with them. I've become closer friends with my class because we've taken so many courses together. The program forms you as a cohort and a community.

At the same time, Academic Program also limited community activities.

> If all the classes are on Tuesdays, there's not much community going on Mondays and Wednesdays. I have to make the academic program a priority over participating in community activities. There are trade-offs. I fall on the side of the academic having priority over the communal.

Academic Program Influences Transformation

Students reported that Academic Program exerted an influence on Transformation, the changes that students experience. They said "The program challenges and affirms, leading to transformation of thinking or of heart. The program teaches us what we need to know and slows us down. It gives us time to transform the way we think and the way we live before we enter ministry. I needed that."

Spirituality (Mid-System)

Study participants placed the affinity Spirituality roughly in the middle of the system. As a mid-system element, Spirituality exerted influence on some other affinities and was influenced by others. Earlier in this chapter, participants reported examples of how Spirituality was influenced by Faculty and Staff and Facilities. This section reports examples of the influence that Spirituality exerted on Emotions and Transformation (Figure 10).

Spirituality Influences Emotions

Participants reported that Spirituality influenced Emotions. They said that sometimes the influence produced negative or uncomfortable feelings:

> Anytime that your spiritual life isn't fruitful, it causes frustration or a feeling of distance from God. I felt abandoned. I know the Spirit was there, but I didn't feel it. That played on my emotions real bad. You have guilt sometimes if you miss your spiritual disciplines.

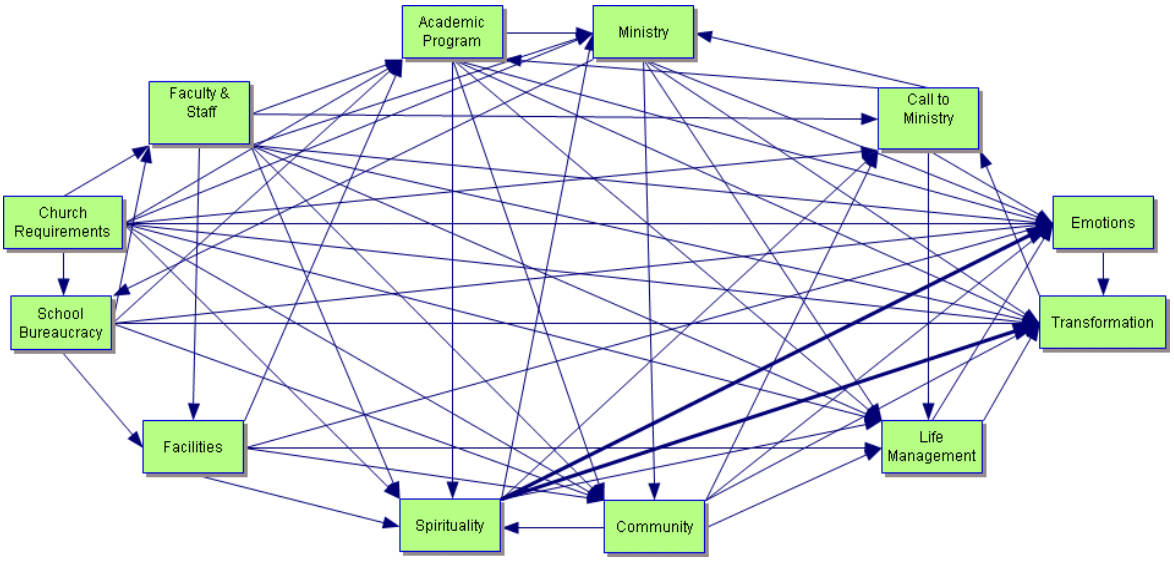

Figure 10

Spirituality Influencing Emotions and Transformation

Participants also reported that Spirituality had a positive impact on their emotions:

> Because my walk with Jesus is primacy in my life, that's always positive. Even when I have a bad day I can go to Christ. Being involved in spiritual practices will give you a sense of peace and relieve stress that causes negative emotions. The more connected you are to God, the less governed you are by your emotions.

Spirituality Influences Transformation

Participants reported that Spirituality exerted influence on Transformation, or changes in their lives. They stated:

> Connectedness to God transforms and shapes who I am and what ministry I do. Prayer, daily devotionals, and scripture reading give a closer connection to God. Then your inner self is transformed. Opening my mind, saying, "I've got to stop being this way; I've got to be more open to chapel services and relationships" led to change. For transformation to take place in a person's life, the Spirit has to be present first.

Community (Mid-System)

Study participants placed the affinity Community roughly in the middle of the system. As a mid-system element, Community exerted influence on some other affinities, and was influenced by others. Earlier in this chapter, participants reported examples of how Community was influenced by Faculty and Staff, School Bureaucracy, and Academic Program. This section reports examples of the influence that Community exerted on Life Management and Transformation (Figure 11).

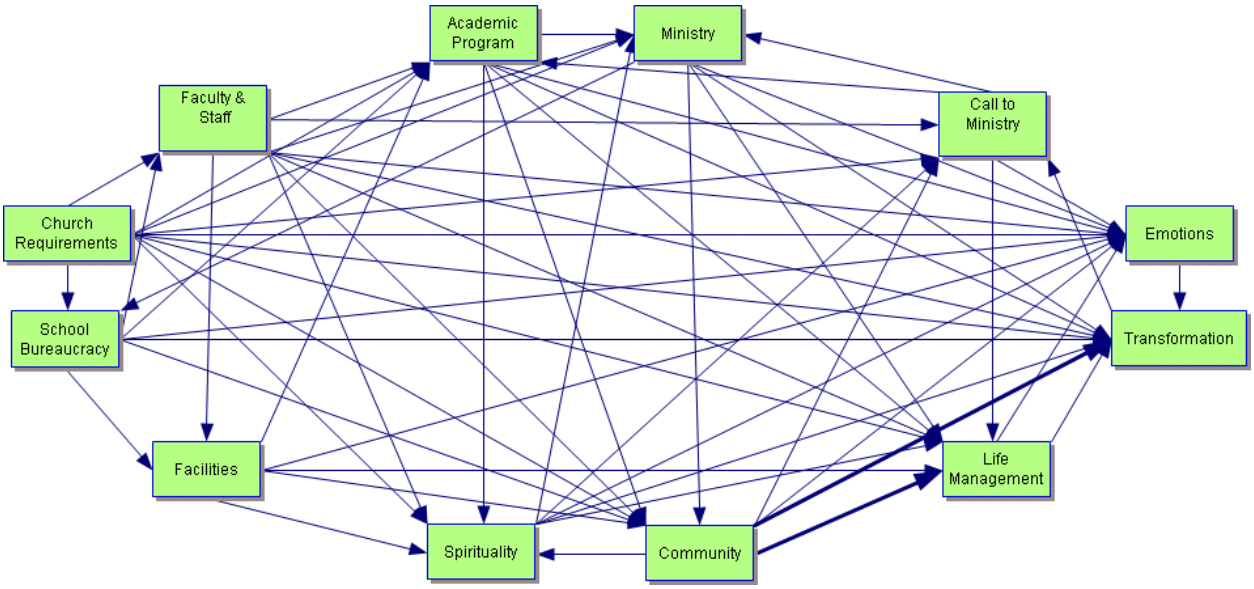

Figure 11

Community Influencing Life Management and Transformation

Community Influences Life Management

Students reported that Community influenced Life Management, or life outside of seminary. They said: "If you feel you have a solid community here, you won't go and

look for it outside. When I've had to be away, the community has supported my family." Another student said that relationships with other students were dominant. "They suck you in! They won't let you out—I mean in a good way. We go to drink margaritas off campus."

Community Influences Transformation

According to participants, Community also influenced Transformation. They said:

> Community allows transformation to happen. It's nice to have a big group of friends that you trust, who will tell you when you are out of place, where you need to grow, or what you do well. We become close and play off of one another. When transformation takes hold, we all go through it at the same time. There's always someone available to talk to, especially about discernment. You learn from your classmates.

Call to Ministry (First-Career: Mid-System; Second-Career: Outcome)

First-career participants placed the affinity Call to Ministry roughly in the middle of the system. Second-career participants placed it as an outcome of the system. Call to Ministry exerted influence on some other affinities, and was influenced by others. Earlier in this chapter, participants reported examples of how Call to Ministry was influenced by Church Requirements. This section reports examples of the influence that Call to Ministry exerted on Emotions and Life Management (Figure 12).

Call to Ministry Influences Emotions

According to participants, Call to Ministry exerted influence on Emotions, or their feelings. They wrote: "When I first felt called, I was shocked and excited. When you

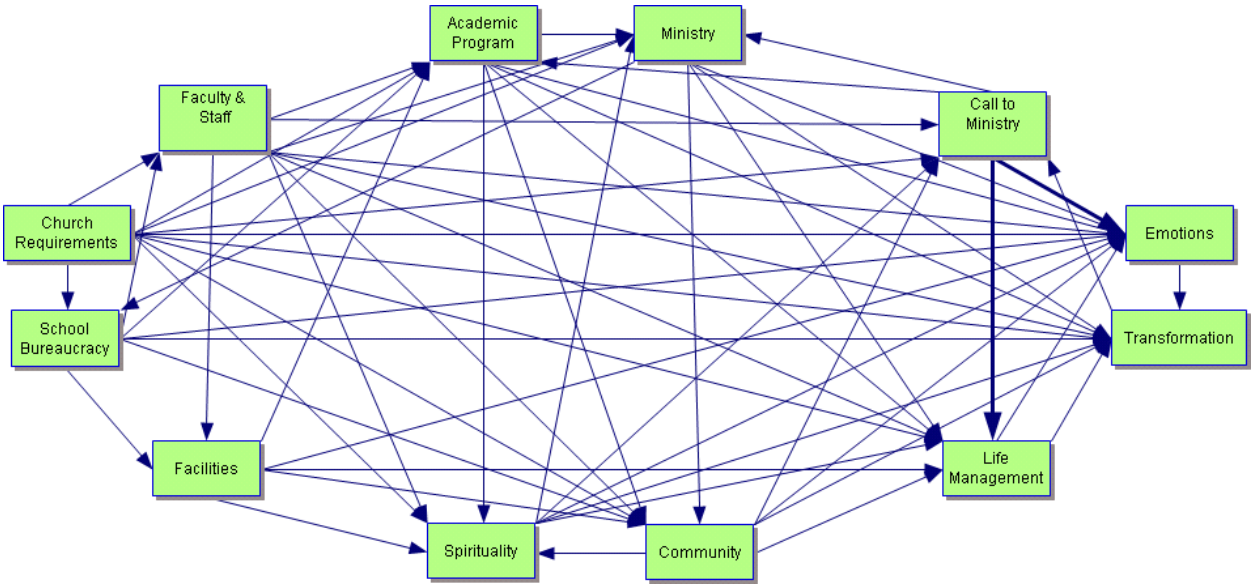

Figure 12

Call to Ministry Influencing Life Management and Emotions

find out in the space of a week that you're going to uproot your whole life because of a call to ministry, it is stressful. If you are frustrated with class, but you feel a strong call, you will push through the frustration."

Call to Ministry Influences Life Management

According to participants, Call to Ministry influenced Life Management. They said:

> In my previous life, I got off work, popped the top of a bottle of beer, and sat on the couch for the rest of the night. I can't do that now. Everything at home changes when you discern your call. Your call influences your activities and the people you hang out with. In order to live as a disciple, my wife and I let life management flow from my sense of call.

Academic Program Influences Call to Ministry

Some students in both constituencies reported that the affinity Academic Program exerted an influence on Call to Ministry. They said:

> The academic program is preparing me for ministry. It's important to be able to have pastoral care classes and things that support my call. The academic program affirmed my gifts for languages. I choose elective classes based on the ministry I feel called to do. I came here with one idea of my call. Now, through doing academic work, I'm going to look at Ph.D. programs.

Ministry (First-Career: Mid-System; Second-Career: Outcome)

First-career participants placed the affinity Ministry roughly in the middle of the system. Second-career participants placed it as an outcome. The affinity Ministry exerted influence on some other affinities, and was influenced by others. Earlier in this chapter, participants reported examples of how Ministry was influenced by School Bureaucracy. This section reports examples of the influence that Ministry exerted on Transformation and provides examples of how Ministry was influenced by Church Requirements and Faculty and Staff (Figure 13).

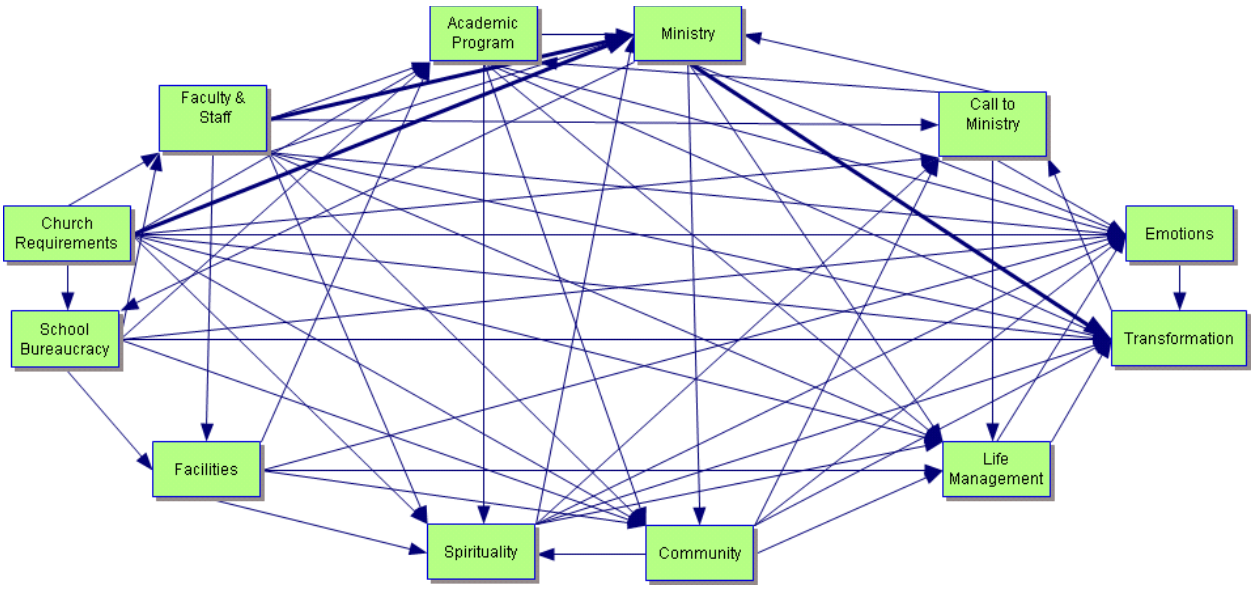

Figure 13

Ministry Is Influenced by Church Requirements and Faculty and Staff; Influencing Transformation

Ministry Influences Transformation

Participants reported that ministry opportunities undertaken while in seminary led to change. They said: "Doing CPE, suddenly you're given this ministry, and you have to transform yourself into a minister. When you are in there really doing ministry, sometimes you learn what you didn't expect, and that can have transformative properties."

Church Requirements Influence Ministry

According to participants, Ministry was influenced by the affinity Church Requirements. Students said: "I did a unit of CPE because my church committee required it. Church committees can tell us that they want you in a small or big church. The requirement of my denomination that I get an M.Div. made me come here. Without the requirement, I would not have had the experience of preaching."

Faculty and Staff Influences Ministry

Students reported that the affinity Ministry was influenced by Faculty and Staff.

> Program director Noah Cartwright interacted with all the professors that I had had to set up my Ministry Practicum. He helped us find a good fit for ministry. When you're looking for letters of recommendation or working with your advisor on finding a call, the faculty influence your ministry. They might recommend a certain church or program for you.

Life Management (Outcome)

For participants in both constituencies, the affinity Life Management was an outcome in the system. As an outcome, many affinities exerted influence on Life Management, while Life Management exerted relatively few influences on other

affinities. Earlier sections in this chapter reported examples of how the affinities Community and Call to Ministry exerted influence on

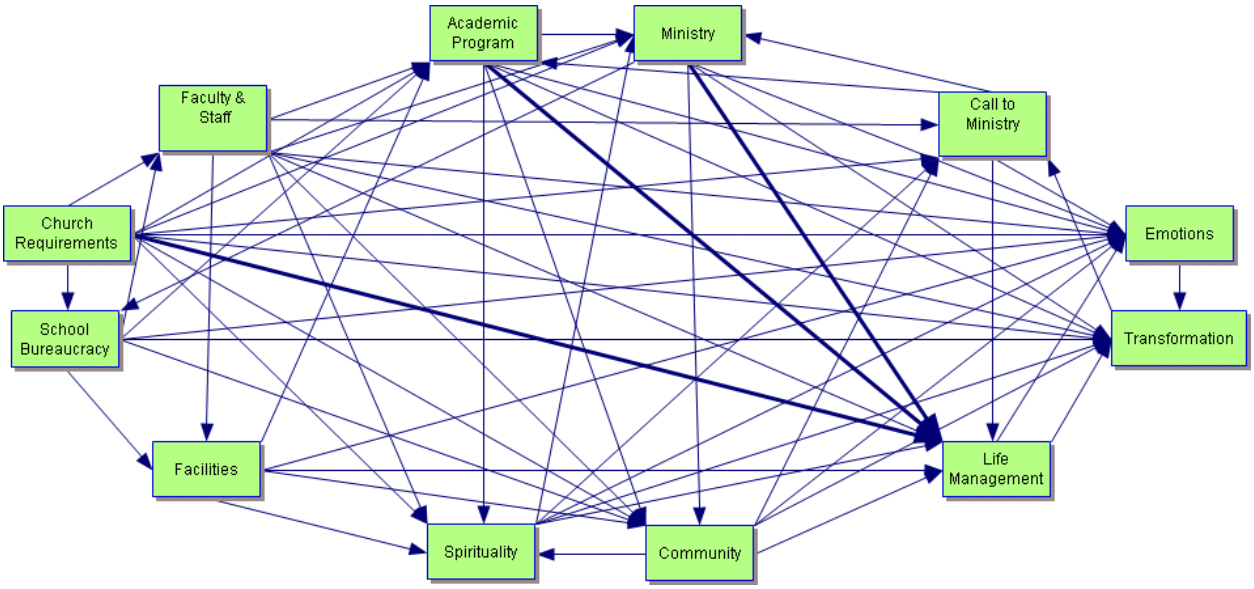

Figure 14

Church Requirements, Academic Program, and Ministry Influencing Life Management

Life Management. This section reports examples of the influence exerted on Life Management by the affinities Church Requirements, Academic Program, and Ministry (Figure 14).

Church Requirements Influence Life Management

Participants from both constituencies reported that Church Requirements influenced Life Management. They said:

> Sometimes the church requires you to do more than the seminary does. The church can make you spend your entire summer doing Clinical Pastoral Education. I'm required to do a CPE, which means I don't graduate on time or I do it the summer after I graduate. You're not able to spend time with your family because you have to go out of town to meet with your committee. Because there are a lot of requirements, we don't

> take the time to have a life outside. We are consumed with getting our requirements done and getting them right.

Academic Program Influences Life Management

Both first- and second-career students stated that Academic Program exerted influence on Life Management:

> So much is expected of you because of classes and reading. If you only concentrate on that, you'd have no life outside of seminary. They give you so much to do**.** I'm not going to hang out with my friends because I have to get a paper written**.** My wife and I have chosen to make this season of working on the M.Div. and becoming a pastor a priority. We allow that to lead over other aspects of life management. I haven't had a haircut in seven months. The things I need to do get shoved aside**.** I have no life outside of seminary.

Ministry Influences Life Management

Ministry also exerted influence on Life Management. Students said:

> Doing CPE was a big strain because we only have one car. Also, it was a priority, so I did that rather than going off and doing other activities. Because of my ministry experiences, my mother and I can talk to each other. Because Young Life has a high standard for integrity and character, I don't drink or smoke.

Emotions (Outcome)

For participants in both constituencies, Emotions was an outcome in the system. As an outcome, many affinities exerted influence on Emotions, while Emotions exerted relatively few influences on other affinities. Earlier sections in this chapter provided examples of how the affinities Spirituality and Call to Ministry influenced Emotions. This section reports examples of the influence exerted on Emotions by the affinities Church Requirements, Facilities, and Faculty and Staff (Figure 15).

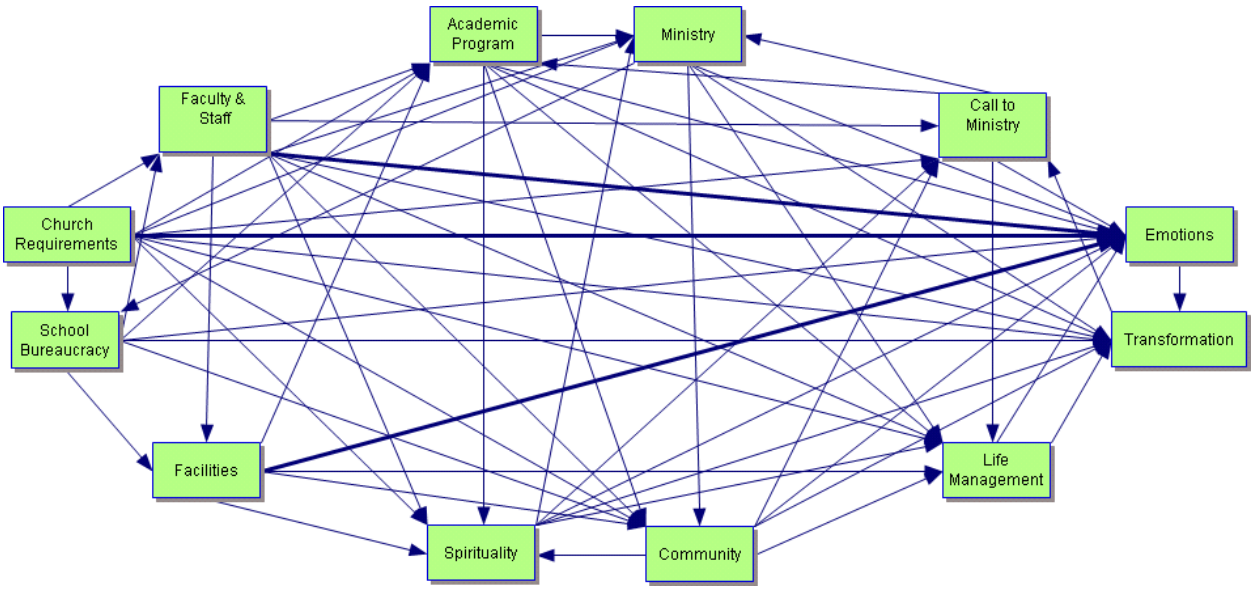

Figure 15

Church Requirements, Faculty and Staff, and Facilities Influencing Emotions

Church Requirements Influence Emotions

Students reported that Church Requirements influenced Emotions. First-career students said: "Church requirements can really affirm you or really bring you down. When we don't pass ordination exams, that's hard and affects our emotional state. When my committee cancelled my candidacy interview with two days' notice, it was very frustrating." Second-career students said:

> The lack of clarity of my church requirements is frustrating. I don't like the sexism that goes on in my church. This isn't an easy process. The pressure put on you by the requirements of your own church or presbytery can get you to the point that you're ready to run backwards and scream. Ordination exams are stupid. It can be frustrating to take them. People can become bitter, though I'm not.

Facilities Influence Emotions

Both first- and second-career students reported that Facilities influenced Emotions. They said:

> Because I'm an introvert, having a dorm room to myself is heaven. Construction near your apartment makes you frustrated and angry. As a person who lives in campus housing, if something breaks, or you are paying a large utility bill because there's no insulation, it's upsetting. In the chapel, there were way too many visuals for me. A lot of information carried in the visuals distracted me from worship. If this were a depressing place, your emotions would be torn up all the time because you are going through a rigorous program.

Faculty and Staff Influence Emotions

Both first- and second-career participants reported that Faculty and Staff influenced Emotions in a variety of ways. In their view:

> Give me a test, you cause me stress. When Norman Cahill worked with me because I wasn't doing well on tests, his ability to work with me lessened my frustration. When I had to go before my local church and presbytery committees, I got upset in Nicholas Cable's class and cried. It was a tiny class. I told him about it afterwards. He told me that one of the reasons he decided to teach the class was because I had signed up for it. Then I cried more. Sometimes professors are nurturing and supportive. Sometimes they are tyrannical. I want to sense that they care about me.

Transformation (Outcome)

For participants in both constituencies, Transformation was an outcome in the system. As an outcome, many affinities exerted influence on Transformation, while Transformation exerted relatively few influences on other affinities. This section reports examples of the influence exerted on Transformation by the affinities Faculty and Staff, Church Requirements, and Call to Ministry (Figure 16).

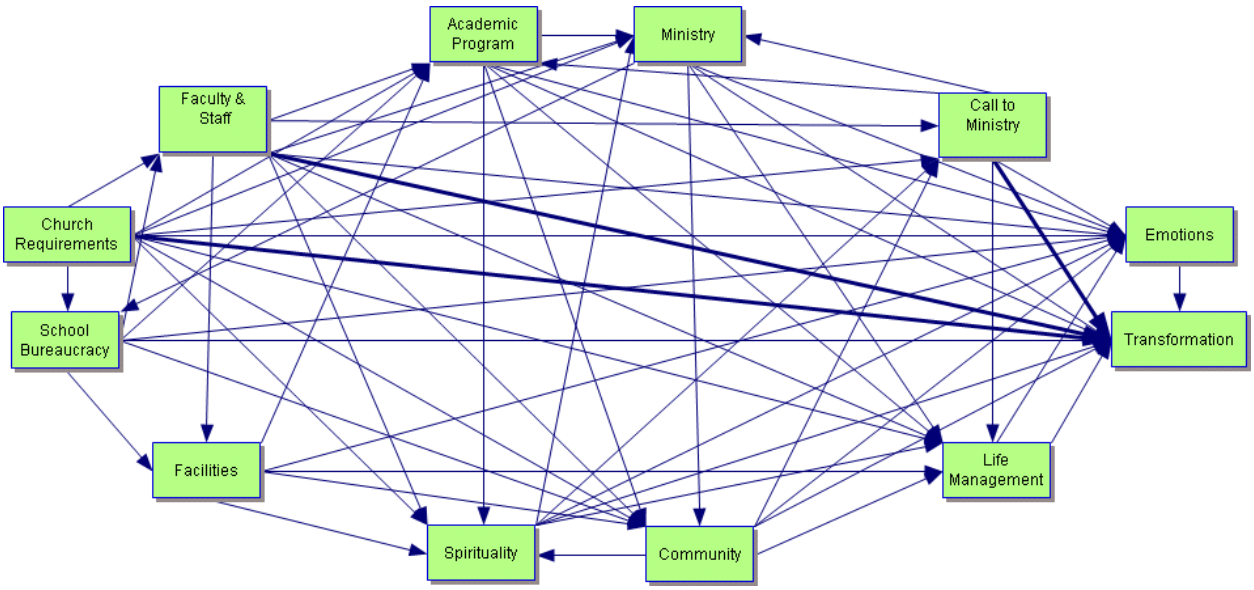

Figure 16

Church Requirements, Faculty and Staff, and Call to Ministry Influencing Transformation

Faculty and Staff Influence Transformation

Participants reported that Faculty and Staff influenced Transformation. They said:

> For me, getting to know the faculty has brought about a transformation. Faculty members are role models. I imagine myself in some of the roles that they fulfill. I don't think I ever would have allowed new career paths to open without faculty suggesting it. I have learned from what the faculty has taught in class. Anytime you have that moment when what the faculty has taught you suddenly kicks in and makes sense, you are changed.

Church Requirements Influences Transformation

Participants reported that Church Requirements influenced Transformation. They said:

> When you go from being an inquirer to being a candidate, you go from not really serious to yes, you're called by the church. It's a big transformation. I wouldn't be here without the church requirement to have an M.Div. Fulfilling church requirements requires a large amount of self-reflection.

> You write a faith statement. You go for a psychological exam. If you're listening, those are roads to transformation. I would not have experienced my transformation if I hadn't had to fulfill the church requirements and found out what I found.

Call to Ministry Influences Transformation

According to some participants, Call to Ministry exerted influence on Transformation. They said:

> My call to ministry is shaping and transforming me. Transformation takes place in you after you've answered the call and see what you're up against. The call will really scare you to death or change your life forever. I believe that God is transforming me by breaking me of things that have been an impediment to me doing ministry: my intellect, my accomplishments.

The Systems Compared: Timbre

The previous major section reported what participants said about the 12 themes of their seminary experience, beginning with affinities that influenced many other parts of the system (drivers) and ending with themes that, according to participants, were acted upon by many other parts of the system (outcomes). The mindmaps for each constituency (Figure 4) have the same general shape, indicating that for members of both constituencies the flow of influence works roughly the same way.

Introduction

This section compares to compare the first- and second-career student mindmaps, addressing research question 3 (how do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?). Specifically, the researcher compares the timbre of each affinity, by constituencies. The comparison of the timbre is significant from an IQA

perspective, since it is possible for two systems to have the same general shape (i.e., agree that certain affinities are drivers and others are outcomes) but dominant timbre for two constituencies might diverge for some or all elements. For instance, one constituency might experience the affinity Community quite positively, while the other constituency might experience it negatively. Alternatively, there may be no dominant timbre for an affinity at all. In this study, the modal value of timbre for affinities was the same in eight cases and differed in four others**.**

For all affinities except for Emotions, the possible values for timbre were positive, neutral, and negative. A rating of positive indicated that, for a given participant, the individual's experience of the affinity was pleasant or useful. A rating of negative indicated that a participant's experience was unpleasant or not useful. A rating of neutral indicated that an individual's experience was neither positive nor negative. Based on analysis of the interview transcripts for the affinity Emotions, the researcher allowed four possible values: positive, neutral, negative, and volatile (i.e., highly variable). Because this study was concerned with the life worlds of first- and second-career students, this section reports timbre ratings by constituency.

Results

Although the general shape of the mindmaps for each constituency was similar, in some cases the modal timbre value for particular affinities differed. Table 24 summarizes modal timbre values by constituency. Figure 17 displays the mindmaps for both constituencies indicating the modal timbre values. All comparisons reported here are based on the researcher's rating of timbre in 17 interview transcripts. Appendix D provides details of researcher ratings for each of the 12 affinities.

Table 24

Modal Affinity Timbre Value, By Constituency

Affinity	First-career	Second-career
Church Requirements*	Positive; Negative	Neutral; Negative
School Bureaucracy	Positive	Positive
Faculty and Staff	Positive	Positive
Facilities	Neutral	Neutral
Academic Program	Positive	Positive
Spirituality*	Positive; Neutral	Positive
Community	Positive	Positive
Ministry	Positive	Positive
Call to Ministry	Positive	Positive
Life Management*	Positive; Neutral	Negative
Emotions*	Volatile	Negative
Transformation	Positive	Positive

*Affinities for which modes differ between the two constituencies.

The most common (modal) value for timbre differed between the first- and second-career constituency for four affinities: Church Requirements, Emotions, Life Management, and Spirituality. Regarding Church Requirements, first-career students were evenly split between those whose timbre was positive and those whose timbre was negative. For the same affinity, there were also two modes for second-career students, neutral and negative. The modal timbre value for the affinity Spirituality was positive or neutral (bimodal) for first-career seminarians, but positive only for second-career seminarians. The modal timbre value for the affinity Emotions was volatile for first-career students, but negative for second-career students. The modal value for the affinity Life Management was positive or neutral (bimodal) for first-career students and negative for second-career students. While both constituencies had a modal timbre value of neutral for Facilities, the distribution of values for first-career students was virtually a tie between positive, neutral, and negative values.

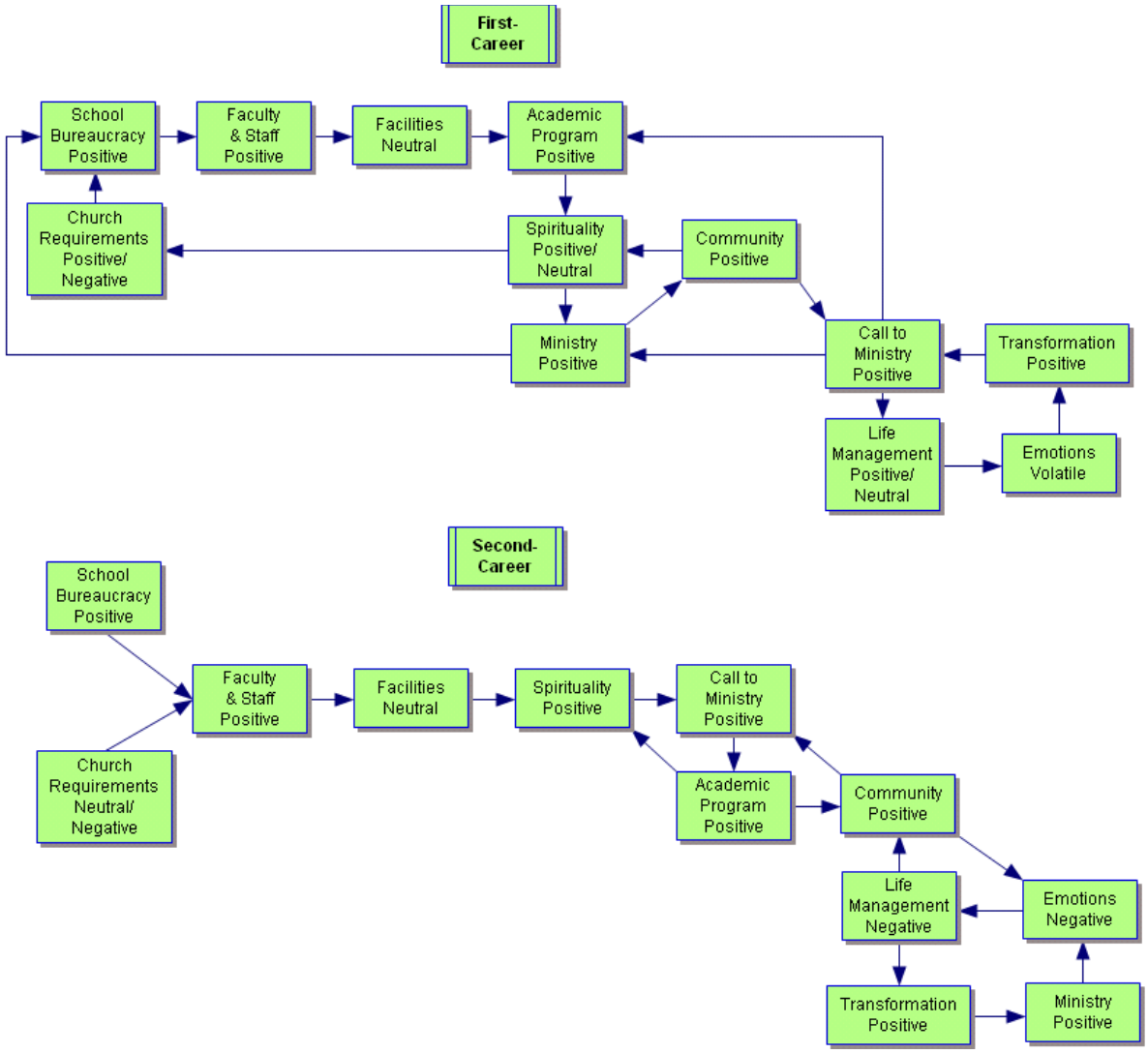

Figure 17

Group Mindmaps for First- and Second-Career Students with Modal Timbre Values

To summarize the comparative results for both constituencies, the modal timbre was different for a primary driver, Church Requirements, and two outcomes, Emotions and Life Management. In each case, the modal value for second-career students was more negative than the value for first-career students. The modal timbre values differed for one mid-system affinity, Spirituality. The modal value for second-career students was

positive. The modal values for first-career students were positive and neutral. Chapter five will discuss possible theoretical explanations for the differences in timbre discovered between constituencies.

The bulk of chapter four has presented the life worlds of study participants in their own words (research question 1) and compared the group mindmaps for first- and second-career seminarians at NCTS (research questions 2 and 3). The final major section of chapter four presents results that address this study's final research question.

Over-Arching Messages of New Creation Theological Seminary

The fourth research question of this study asked if first- and second-career seminarians at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) identified an over-arching message to their theological education. Participants who gave full interviews (i.e., interviews in which they discussed the 12 affinities at length) responded to this question orally. Participants who underwent shorter interviews (primarily concerned with the relationships between affinities) responded to this question in writing. Virtually all respondents identified a dominant message. Based on analysis of student discourse, two primary messages emerged. According to first-career seminarians, the over-arching message promoted by NCTS was that NCTS was a *community*. According to second-career seminarians, the over-arching message promoted by the school was that NCTS *trained pastors*. Some participants in both constituencies identified both community and professional training as dominant messages. Some participants in each constituency identified other messages. Table 25 summarizes the responses by constituency.

Table 25

Over-arching Message of NCTS, By Constituency (n=37)

Message	First-Career (n=16)	First-Career Percentage	Second-Career (n=21)	Second-Career Percentage
Community	6	35	4	17
Training	2	12	10	42
Both community & training	6	35	3	12
Other messages	1	6	7	29
None	2	12	0	0
Total	17	100	24	100
Mode	Community		Training	

Because some participants identified more than one over-arching message, the total number of messages reported is greater than 37.

This section first reports what participants said about community as the over-arching message, then participant comments on professional training as the central message of the school. The section concludes by reporting the other messages identified by participants. This section reports results in the words of students. Chapter five explores the meaning of these over-arching messages in light of participant responses from the full interviews and puts the results into conversation with theory.

Message One: Community

According to many participants, NCTS promoted a dominant message of *community*. First-career participants said that this community was supportive and non-competitive:

> I think community is our message. That really is it. It's an encouraging, supporting kind of community. It's hard for the spouses to come here and leave everything behind. There is a really good spouse group that helps out with that. There's community not only between the students and spouses, but also faculty and staff altogether. There is a genuine sense of caring among everybody that you don't seem to get at every seminary. I really like the lack of academic competition, compared to what Princeton seems to have. We are an open community for people to come and

> discover God. This message of being together and working together is supported by most of the faculty and staff. SOLID education with a caring and nurturing community.

One first-career seminarian lamented the difference between the ideal of community and what she perceived around her. “While I have an intimate community on campus, I do not feel we are united as a larger community. I am happy with the community that I have, but I am disappointed with what was promoted as community and the reality of the ‘community’ we are in.”

Some second-career participants also identified community as a dominant message. They said:

> The message is the winsome community message. I think that the school promotes that message. We are here to have a theological education, but the most important thing is that we maintain community within our group, including faculty and staff. Living on campus, I feel there is a very strong sense of community. On-campus housing is one of the main reasons that I chose NCTS over other schools. The message is faith seeking understanding in community.

One second-career student noted that not everyone may feel part of the NCTS community: “I’m not sure everybody feels quite as included. Everyone doesn’t have the same community experience.”

Message Two: Professional Training

Some first-career participants reported that the over-arching message of NCTS was excellence in the professional training of pastors.

> New Creation Theological Seminary trains people to be pastors in a community. The school raises up leaders for the kingdom of God. There is an emphasis on preparing for practical ministry—to preach and care for a specific congregation after ordination. Here men and women are trained to serve God’s Church with a specific emphasis on the Reformed tradition. I feel that I am receiving a valuable and transforming education for ministry.

This message of professional training was the modal message identified by second-career participants. They said:

> NCTS wants to develop pastors who live out a genuine faith in the midst of the realities of this present time. We want people to be Christian disciples and help others to become part of church in this reality. This institution is saying, we're all the church, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, it doesn't matter. We're all the body of Christ. The school has the niche of preparing people for parish ministry in a very positive, warm, caring way. We are challenged on many levels to get ready for real-world pastoral ministry. This seminary is going to provide the best theological education that it can by providing a balanced curriculum in skills needed by a pastor. The school wants us to engage in meaningful, reflective, serious, and purposeful theological study for Christian ministry and service. New Creation seeks to equip, challenge, and enable its students to be fair-minded, critical, faithful ministers.

Other Messages or No Message

A few participants identified other over-arching messages promoted by NCTS. Some stressed openness and exploration:

> We're an open place for people to come and discover God. Be as you are and accept challenges, and explore yourself so that you can help others. The dominant message is faith seeking understanding. NCTS wants to challenge any preconceived notions that one has about theology and life.

One student stated that the school's dominant message was to promote a distinctly Presbyterian view: "I heard a student say 'the Presbyterian Faith.' For me, that clarified how I see what this place is projecting, a distinctively Presbyterian worldview of the body of Christ." Another student noted that the school emphasized the Reformed theological tradition. Another contended that the dominant message was in flux. "I think that the message may be changing. It has been about community and producing pastors/ministers. Now the message seems to be, whether by volition or not, growth and expansion."

Two first-career students reported that the school lacked an over-arching message. One said: "There's a little bit of everything here. People come from different denominations and backgrounds. They have different views. It's a hodgepodge, so I don't see one dominant theme." Niles Stalworth (whose mindmap will be explored in chapter five) suggested that the school might have an implicit philosophical or ideological message despite itself:

> I don't think the school has a dominant message. That's the problem. We're an academic institution. We're just around the corner from State University in a very Democratic, liberal city. Here, the idea of one message or one truth doesn't permeate this atmosphere at all. If you make a strong, exclusive claim about Jesus Christ, you're viewed very skeptically. So if there is a message, maybe it's that there is no truth. But I don't know. If there's been a dominant message, I've missed it.

Chapter Four: Summary

This section summarizes chapter four, relating results to the study's four research questions. The researcher questioned participants about their seminary experience in group and individual interviews. Participants used 12 themes to describe their seminary experience (research question 1), ranging from Church Requirements to Transformation. Table 22 (above) summarizes the affinities and 68 sub-themes voiced by participants. Using IQA methods, the researcher created mindmaps for first- and second-career constituencies. The mindmaps graphically display how participants related the themes of their seminary experience into a system of thought (research question 2). Comparative analysis (research question 3) of the mindmaps for each constituency showed that the systems were quite similar in terms of drivers and outcomes. In both systems, Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy were drivers; Transformation and Emotions were

outcomes. Analysis of the timbre of the affinities (research questions 2 and 3) revealed differences in modal timbre for four of the 12 elements in the system (see Table 24). Finally, the majority of participants in this study identified two over-arching messages to their theological education (research question 4). The modal message identified by first-career students was that New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) promoted community. The modal message identified by second-career students was that NCTS provided professional training for ministry.

This chapter presented the results of the study, focusing on the words of participants themselves and how the inter-relationships between affinities created life worlds at one theological school. Chapter five explores the meaning of these data by relating the results to previous research on the life worlds of seminary students and theory. The chapter reports the limitations of this study. Chapter five also reports how the results of this research modify the Students in Seminary model (Table 12) presented in chapter two, open up new research possibilities, and might influence the way that seminaries work.

Chapter Five: The Seminary Experience Interpreted

Chapter four presented the results of this study of the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). That chapter reported on the systemic similarities between the group mindmaps of both constituencies and noted similarities and differences in timbre for each affinity. Chapter four also reported that participants voiced two over-arching messages promoted by NCTS. The commonest message identified by first-career seminarians was that the school promoted community. The commonest message identified by second-career seminarians was that the school promoted training for ministry. Chapter five interprets these results.

Specifically, chapter five does six things. First, the chapter reiterates the problem statement and research questions of this study. Second, the chapter provides a summary of the entire research project. Third, the chapter probes the meanings of results presented in the previous chapter by examining key motifs reported by participants and reflecting on the congruence and incongruence of the life worlds experienced by first- and second-career students at NCTS. Fourth, the chapter examines in depth the discovery of two common understandings of the dominant or over-arching message of the seminary. Each of these messages functions as a promise or implied contract between the seminary and its students. Fifth, the chapter then broadens the discussion of results in two ways. Results are put into conversation with theory. The researcher argues that results are consistent with life-course theory. The portrait of a student at NCTS (whether first- or second-career) that emerges is that of an engaged, compliant satisficer. The researcher then compares the results of this study with the published literature on seminary students.

Building on the results of this study, theory, and the published literature, the researcher proposes modifications to the conceptual model of Students in Seminary described in chapter two (Table 12). Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limits of the study, implications of the study for those who lead theological schools, and suggestions for further research.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The majority of students entering seminaries in the first decade of the Twenty-First Century in North America do so with work experience in some field. Theological educators recognize that the life experience of a single 22-year-old fresh out of college is different from the life experience of a married 35-year-old (who may also be a parent) that enrolls at the same seminary (Forsberg & Mudge, 1991). However, relatively few studies have taken seriously the breadth in ages represented in the student population of graduate theological schools. The studies focusing on second-career seminarians that have been published, as chapter two of this study documents, focus on motivation to attend seminary (Jones, 1996), learning styles (Reistroffer, 1997), and leadership practices (Hillman, 2004). Such research does little to shed light on what the seminary experience means to students themselves, whether students are in seminary during their odyssey years or are older.

This study explores the seminary experience of first-career and second-career theological students in one free-standing Protestant seminary using interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Specifically, this study investigates four research questions:

1. What themes do first- and second-career seminarians use to describe their seminary experience?

2. How do first- and second-career seminarians relate these themes into a system of thought (mindmap)?

3. How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare?

4. Do first- and second-career seminarians identify an over-arching message to their theological education?

The Seminary Experience: Project Summary

This section provides a summary of this project comparing the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students at New Creation Theological Seminary. This project used interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) and was rooted in phenomenology (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Husserl, 1954/1970, 1965, 1999; Merleau-Ponty, 1967; Schutz,1932/1967, 1970) and ecological life-span theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005). First, this summary provides a brief review of literature pertinent to the study. Second, the summary describes the research site and method. Third, this summary reports results, then interprets them. Fourth, this summary makes recommendations for practice and suggests future areas of research.

Literature Review

Relatively little research addresses the lived experience of theological students in the United States from the point of view of the students themselves. The existing literature discusses the intended (Banks, 1999; Farley,1983; Kelsey, 1992, 1993;

Wheeler, Miller, & Schuth, 2005) and enacted curricula of theological schools (Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2006), but says relatively little about the experience of second-career students (Larsen, 1995; Larsen & Shopshire, 1988). Association of Theological Schools (ATS) survey instruments collect data on the seminary experience (Lonsway, 2001, 2002), but it is difficult to interpret the meaning of these data. Standard reports do not aggregate results by age, masking differences or similarities between first- and second-career seminarians.

Some research about students in social work and nursing attends to age as a variable of interest. This literature notes that many older women experience stress as they simultaneously enact the roles of student and parent (Gigliotti, 2007; Rifenbary, 1995). Some studies using qualitative methods (e.g., Kevern & Webb, 2004) provide insight into the lived experience of students.

Research Site and Method

This study was conducted at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS), a free-standing Protestant seminary. The site had a mix of first- and second-career students in the Master of Divinity program. Using IQA methods (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the researcher led two focus groups to discover the major affinities, or themes, of the seminary experience. The researcher then conducted interviews with 17 students in which participants discussed their experience of the 12 affinities and made pair-wise comparisons of the themes, making judgments about how affinities exerted influence on one another. The researcher conducted shorter interviews with 20 other students focusing on relationships between affinities. All 37 participants responded to a question about

whether or not NCTS promoted an over-arching, or central message. The researcher transcribed all text and coded data about inter-relationships between affinities.

Study Results

In full interviews, participants identified 68 sub-themes of their seminary experience. Table 26 summarizes these themes and sub-themes. Only three sub-themes (technology, sexism, and extreme emotions) were distinctive to one constituency. Using information supplied by participants and IQA procedures, the researcher generated group mindmaps for each constituency. Figure 18 depicts these conceptual worlds. Most participants identified one or more central messages promoted by NCTS. According to first-career seminarians, the central message was community. According to second-career seminarians, the central message was training for ministry. Table 27 summarizes the data about the school's over-arching message.

Table 26
Themes and Sub-Themes of the Seminary Experience

Affinity/Theme	Sub-Themes	
Church requirements	Hoops	Presbyterian ordination examinations
	Church requirements as Valuable	Oversight committees
Faculty and staff	Faculty as supportive	Other staff as competent
	Faculty as instructors	Other staff as supportive
	Faculty as advisors	
School bureaucracy	School bureaucracy as efficient	Registration and scheduling
	The personal touch	Communication problems
	Admissions and financial aid	Concerns about housing policies
Facilities	Campus setting	Student housing
	Classrooms	Technology (first-career only)
	Library	
Academic program	Cohesive curriculum	Focus on learning
	Academic program as challenging	Serendipity learning outside of classroom
	Academic program as practical	Transitions from college and previous careers
	Demanding workload	Perspectives of non-Presbyterians
	Teaching techniques	
Community	Community as a core value	Student groups promoting community
	NCTS as welcoming school	Conflicts between students
	Need for engagement	Student families and community
Spirituality	Chapel worship	God in nature
	Group practices of spirituality	Distinctive spiritual experiences
	Individual practices of spirituality	Sensing God's presence
	Time constraints and discipline	
Call to Ministry	Intuition of the divine	Affirmation by others
	Slowly developing calls	Sexism (second-career only)
	Sudden calls	Changes in understanding of call
Ministry	Importance of fit	New discoveries
	Variety of ministry tasks	Call to ministry clarified
	Experiential learning	
Life management	No life outside NCTS	Spouses and family
	Value of self-care	Need for balance
Transformation	Theological knowledge	Need for openness
	Professional knowledge	People support transformation
	Perception of call	God
	Personal growth	
Emotions	Positive emotions	Roller coaster of emotions
	Frustration	Extreme cases (second-career only)

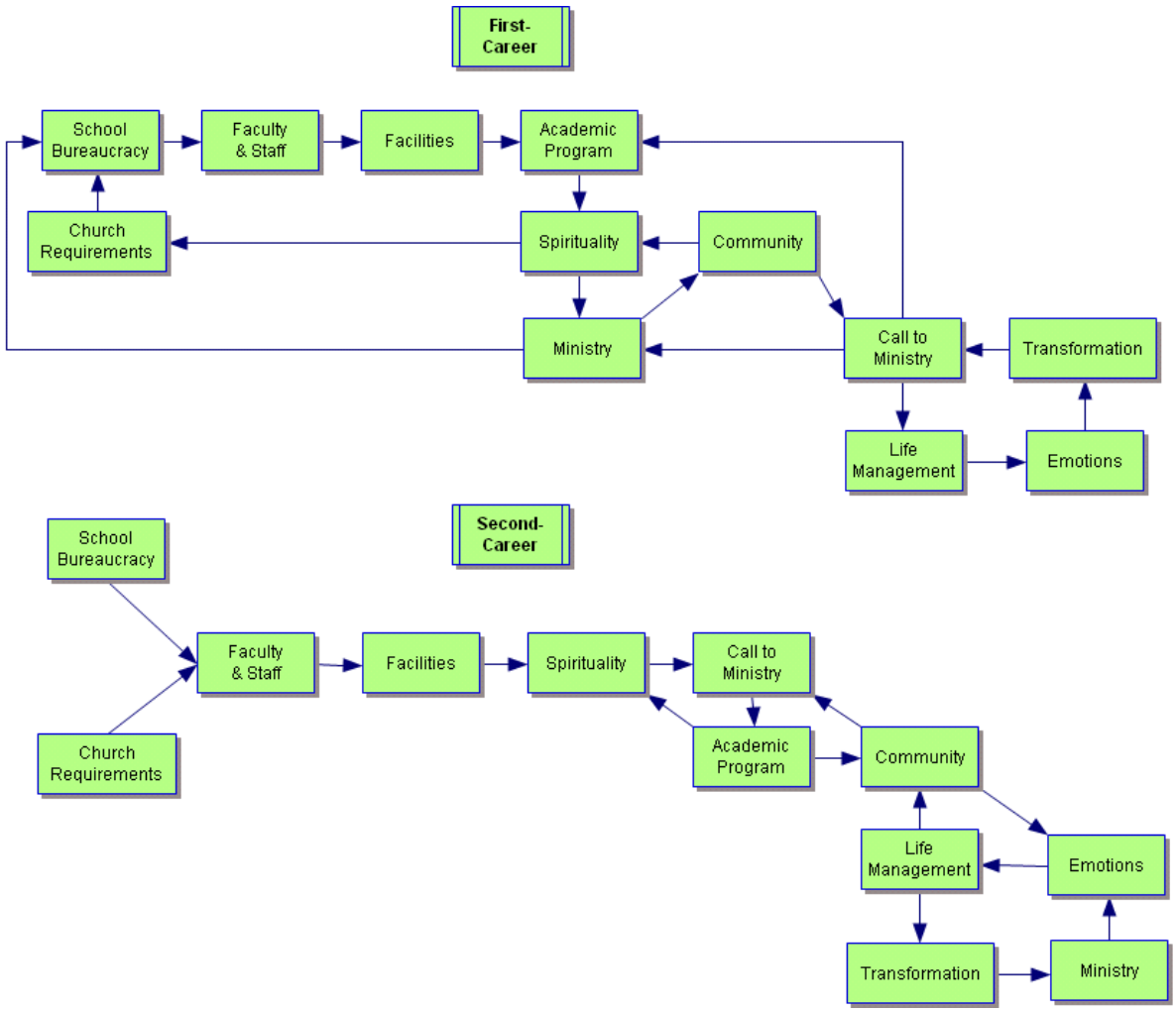

Figure 18
First- and Second-Career Mindmaps in Parallel

Table 27 *Over-arching Message of NCTS, by Constituency* (n=37)

Message	First-Career (n=16)	First-Career Percentage	Second-Career (n=21)	Second-Career Percentage
Community	6	35	4	17
Training	2	12	10	42
Both community & training	6	35	3	12
Other messages	1	6	7	29
None	2	12	0	0
Total	17	100	24	100
Mode	Community		Training	

Because some participants identified more than one over-arching message, the total number of messages reported is greater than 37.

Interpretation of Results

Upon analysis, key motifs of the student experience were the importance of the school's facilities, NCTS as an intimate community, and the variation of experiences that students had of relationships with other students. Students became satisficers, choosing satisfactory solutions to the competing demands of school, church, and family. Students reported that their theological education required vigorous engagement and self-discipline. Students affirmed that God was active in their life worlds.

First- and Second-Career Students Have Similar Conceptual Worlds

Analysis of the findings of this study suggests that the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students are similar, both in the shape of group mindmaps and in the dominant timbre for affinities. For typical members of both constituencies, Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy influence other affinities. The outcome is change. Students acquire new theological knowledge, pastoral skills, and a refined sense of vocation. By substituting super affinities, or broader interpretive categories, for clusters of affinities, IQA produces an interpretation of typical NCTS students as transformed satisficers. Figure 19 depicts this model. Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005) provides an explanation for two distinctive sub-themes of student experience. First-career students commented on the school's information technology, consistent with their life experience as digital natives. Second-career students reported cases of extreme emotion during seminary, which were normative events for individuals in their 30s and later.

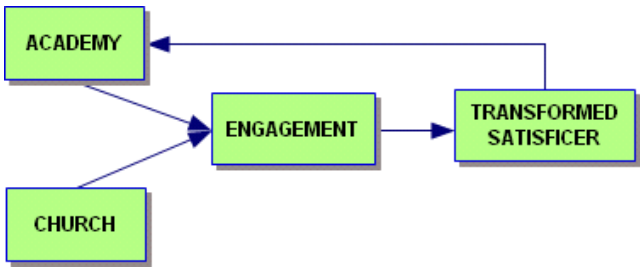

Figure 19

Group Mindmap of NCTS Student with Super Affinities in Place

One School, Two Over-Arching Messages

First-career students concluded that the seminary's central message was about community, while second-career students concluded that the central message was about training for ministry. Both of these messages were part of the official mission statement of NCTS. Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005) suggests that students received the over-arching messages that they did because of how they were shaped by involvement in various micro-systems. Both of the dominant messages received by students functioned as an implied promise or psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989, 1995) between the seminary and its students.

New Light on Previous Research

This study's results provide new insight into data routinely collected by the Association of Theological Schools. For instance, call to ministry appears to remain fluid throughout a student's time in seminary and is reshaped by the seminary experience. Unlike previous published studies of theological students, this study found that the church requirements of Protestant denominations and the school's facilities played significant roles in student experience. This study found that NCTS promoted multiple

messages, not a single dominant message as Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) discovered in earlier ethnographic research at two sites.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study suggest that first- and second-career students experience theological education as a complex, iterative system. Theological educators can enhance student experience by recognizing the demands that denominational requirements make on seminarians, supporting the development of formal and informal student groups, and insuring that campus housing and other resources do not frustrate student engagement.

Areas for Further Research

The results point to four fruitful areas for further research. First, researchers might explore the extent to which the faculty and administration of theological schools take church expectations into account when devising curricula and teaching. Second, researchers could explore whether this study's findings about the importance of school bureaucracy and facilities were idiosyncratic to this research site or a general student concern in theological education.

A third area of research concerns the general usefulness of the affinities discovered at this research site. IQA research at other mainline seminaries could suggest if the 12 affinities articulated by students at this research site are common to the life worlds of students at other theological schools. Finally, further research might explore how NCTS was able to transmit its mission statement to students as effectively as it did. Further research might be conducted at other theological schools to test the range of messages that various constituencies perceive.

Key Motifs in the Life Worlds of Participants

As reported in detail in chapter four, participants spoke about 12 affinities of their experience as students at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). Upon analysis, the researcher concluded that interview data contained 68 sub-themes. Table 26 earlier in this chapter summarizes the themes and sub-themes. Chapter four presented the themes and sub-themes of NCTS students in their own words. This section examines six key motifs that the researcher discovered in the analysis of interview transcripts. The six motifs are the importance of facilities, New Creation Theological Seminary as an intimate community, variation in student experiences of community, time constraints, the often-voiced idea that the seminary experience requires intentional engagement, and finally, the presence of God.

These motifs cut across the 12 main affinities, or themes, discovered in this research. To qualify as a *motif*, student discourse about an idea needed to be present in the speech of members of both the first- and second-career constituencies and to be repeated in more than one affinity. For instance, informants spoke about God under the themes Call to Ministry, Spirituality, Ministry, and Transformation. The discussion of motifs deepens understanding of the life worlds of students at NCTS (research question 1 of this study). To identify motifs, the researcher analyzed write ups of the 12 affinities presented in chapter four. These write ups relied the individual interview transcripts (17 participants). The researcher analyzed blocks of discourse and determined a name for the dominant concept in the motif. Thus, the motifs presented in this section are the product of the research's judgment, based on informant discourse.

The Importance of Facilities

The first motif is the importance that participants placed on the facilities provided by New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). In the group mindmaps for both first- and second-career students (Figure 18), the affinity Facilities is situated in the driver zone of the system. In IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) terms, the affinity Facilities exerted influence on many other themes of student experience. In this research, students were generally pleased with the quality of classrooms and valued the campus' serene, park-like setting. They expressed appreciation for resources in the library. However, students voiced concerns about the variation in rents that the school charged for on-campus housing. Students who lived on campus were inconvenienced by the construction of Scholars Hall, which not only interrupted their sleep and raised dust but literally cut the residential side of the campus in two, making it more difficult to visit friends on the other side of the construction site. As one student put it, "Scholars Hall has been the bane of everyone's existence." According to students, the administration of the school did not seem to care about student problems caused by the construction and did not communicate clearly about the construction process. The majority of interview time spent criticizing school leaders was used talking about issues related to student housing and the construction of the new student apartment. NCTS students valued residential community, literally being together. Facilities promoted or inhibited the everyday rhythm of students being with other students. While the overall timbre for this affinity varied widely, students appeared generally satisfied with academic buildings but generally dissatisfied with student housing.

NCTS as an Intimate Community

A second motif that cut across themes was the common perception that New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) was an intimate community of students, their families, faculty, and staff bound together by Christian religious commitments. In this community, students commonly referred to professors and administrators by their first names. The participant who told the story of President Nelson Cavett not remembering his name suggested that the president was violating an unwritten but real cultural norm. In this intimate community, where staff like Tess Salzman prayed for students before they matriculated and professors helped students to discern their calls to ministry, seminarians placed a high value on friendliness and individual attention. Moreover, students were encouraged by professors like Thelma Saddler to engage in dialogue rather than argument with persons with whom they disagreed. NCTS students created informal support groups, like the quasi-secret Not From Around Here group. Methodist students sought support from fellow Methodists. The charismatic/Pentecostal students formed their own community within a community. Students, whether first- or second-career, reported that community was a core value of the school. It is plausible that the relatively small size of NCTS was a factor that promoted the perception of closeness voiced by informants.

Varieties of Community

Nevertheless, not all students who participated in this research had the positive experiences of community. A third motif of this study was the broad variation in student experiences of community, or relationships with other students. Commuter students reported that "community has been in class and being in the dining hall for lunch" or

stated that their primary social relationships were with people at work or church. Thus, relationships with other students were valued, but were not the only supportive relationships that commuter students had. By contrast, students who lived in seminary housing reported that community meant relationships with other students and their families. The on-campus community was not Utopia, but included "the crap" of getting along with the neighbors. According to students, NCTS faculty and staff were part of the seminary community to the extent that they interacted with students, whether in formal roles (as teachers and advisors) or informally (attending Student Forum or playing touch football).

Three seminarians in this study who participated in full interviews were not members of the majority White racial group**.** Both the Korean American respondent and the respondent who was a Korean citizen and had been living in the United States for two years reported that they socialized with other Koreans or Asians. The second-career participant who identified herself as multi-racial also commented repeatedly on the difference between the Eurocentric view of NCTS and her own Hamito-Semitic outlook. She also reported that the official stance of the seminary was inclusivity, but sometimes she felt excluded, just as one of the Pentecostal students reported that his theological views and worship practices were not welcomed at a "very liberal" seminary. Not every student had the same experience of NCTS as a welcoming community, ideology notwithstanding.

Time Constrains Everything: Students as Satisficers

A fourth motif voiced by students in several contexts was the endless challenge of doing what the seminary, the church, and family obligations required within the time

available to them. In the mindmaps for both constituencies, Life Management was situated in the last part of the systems, an outcome. This location suggests that these participants made sacrifices in their lives outside seminary for the sake of being seminary students. Students reported that the workload of the school's academic program was often overwhelming. Reading ate hours of time. Studying biblical languages intensively was exhausting. Students, whether married or single, commonly reported that they had virtually no life outside of going to school. Students were aware of the need for self-care (whether they practiced it or not) and noted the importance of discovering a workable balance between seminary life and other commitments. Some tried to carve out weekends for church and family. Time constrained everything, to the point that some students put off their own medical appointments and did not engage in spiritual practices as frequently as they desired. The academic calendar of the seminary drove decisions about childcare and spousal work schedules. As one married student with children put it, "We are all in seminary together." The dominant timbre for the affinity Life Management (i.e., a student's life beyond NCTS) was negative for second-career participants, suggesting that they were unhappy that they had little time for non-seminary activities.

Students made different decisions about how to use time. For instance, some did not go to chapel when they had a deadline for a paper or were studying for a test. Others chose to attend chapel, knowing that it meant that they had less time to use to pursue their academic work. Students also satisficed as they met church requirements. For instance, one student reported flying out of state to meet with an oversight committee even though school was in session and the trip entailed missing class sessions. Some students took specific courses or Clinical Pastoral Education because oversight committees insisted. In

terms of ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979; 2005), study participants participated simultaneously in several microsystems such as their families, relationships with faculty, and relationships with church committees. Students reported making trade offs about their levels of participation in these microsystems. Thus, because time was a finite resource, they satisficed rather than optimized.

NCTS student perceptions about not having enough time echo a finding of Larsen and Shopshire (1988). Concern about having enough time was a top source of stress for students in seminary, whether first- or second-career, as reported in Table 2. For study participants, as for Twenty-First Century persons in the developed world (Conley, 2009; Hamermesh & Lee, 2003; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Kraaykamp, van Gils, & Ultee, 2008), time was a limited resource. In Bronfennbrenner's (1979, 2005) terms, when faced with competing demands for time, study participants sought to meet the minimum requirements of their microsystems (family and seminary and work). They were aware of their inability to meet all expectations at a consistently high level. Faced with the need to make decisions and aware of competing goods, NCTS students resorted to satisficing (Byron, 2004; Simon, 1947, 1982).

The Necessity of Student Engagement

A fifth motif that emerged from student interviews was the necessity for students to invest themselves in the seminary experience with vigor. By *engagement*, informants meant more than complying with school procedures and church requirements—although students did indicate that it was necessary to jump through procedural hoops. Rather, the picture of engagement painted by informants meant taking seriously the wealth of new

ideas, new relationships, and sometimes uncomfortable apprenticeship experiences that presented themselves to students at NCTS.

Students developed positive relationships with other students, according to participants, to the extent that they took initiative to create support groups and participated in student activities. One student noted that the dean of students organized some small groups, but "the real ones formed later." Because of time constraints, student spirituality required effort and self-discipline. Some students were changed in significant ways by the experience of going to chapel, even though the style of worship services was initially off-putting. Students reported being changed by theological knowledge and by acquiring new professional skills. In all of these cases, participants reported that the attitude needed to facilitate transformation was openness. One student commented on a peer who changed because "he didn't give up or go away. He showed up. Our professors and other students were willing to engage him. And it changed him." According to participants, the engaged student was not a passive absorber of information or experiences, but an active thinker who pondered new ideas about the Bible and engaged in conversations with students of different theological backgrounds. Informants who spoke about being open also reported that they were changed in significant ways by going to seminary.

By contrast, first-career student Niles Stalworth, who reported that NCTS had not changed him, articulately described how he systematically screened all new ideas and discarded those with which he disagreed. As a result, he stated, "I'm walking out of here with a very similar paradigm to what I came in with." Mr. Stalworth did write essays and take tests, but he was proud of his commitment to defend himself from the "very liberal"

and impractical ideas that he reported were part of the curriculum. This informant did not report learning any new ministry skills during seminary. He also reported that he had few friends in the student body, and received emotional support primarily from his local church. He was one of the few participants who did not report that NCTS promoted an over-arching message.

For these study participants, as for students in higher education in general (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2004; Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Kuh, 2005), engagement promotes learning. Lack of engagement results in less new knowledge, fewer new skills, and less change.

NCTS students also affirmed the importance of belonging to groups. Although participation in groups may not lead to increased academic achievement, previous research has found that students value groups because they provide inter-personal support (DeVoe, Niles, Andrews, Benjamin, Blacklock, Brainard, et al., 2007; Hendry, Hyde, & Davy, 2005; Hockings, DeAngelis, & Frey, 2008; Midcap, Seitzer, Holliday, Childs, & Bowser, 2008; Schreiber, 1989; Uyder, 2008).

The Reality of God

The sixth motif discovered in this research at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) was God's role in the life world of participants. According to participants, a perception that God was leading them to some sort of ministry motivated them to begin theological studies. Sometimes God spoke to participants clearly and directly as clearly as one person speaks to another. Sometimes God merely nudged. These participants wanted to feel the presence of God. They participated in group spiritual activities (e.g., chapel worship) and individual disciplines (prayer, meditation, spending time in the

natural world) in order to sense God's presence. The transformation that many participants reported had to do with theological knowledge (ways that other believers had made sense about God) and ministerial skills such as praying for others and reading the Bible. Indeed, one effect of being a seminary student was attuning oneself to God so much that God became inescapable. One participant reported: "Some of us saw the movie *A Bee's Life*. I was with a friend and she said, "I didn't want anything theological," and it was there! Even in movies! It's everywhere." Students entered NCTS affirming the reality of God. For many participants, the seminary experience enhanced that perception. The plausibility structure (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) of seminary reinforced student belief in God.

The Engaged, Compliant Seminarian

The life world of NCTS seminarians, whether first- or second-career, has a distinctive shape. The seminary experience is lived in a specific campus context that adequately addresses academic needs but is sometimes deficient in its living arrangements. At their best, students comply with expectations of their church bodies and engage the academic program with a sense of openness. The work is demanding. For those who throw themselves into the experience, the result is new knowledge and new pastoral skills. Seminary changes students. Engagement and transformation come at a price, however. Students make difficult decisions about their use of time, privileging academics and ministry over leisure and family. They satisfice in order to make their way toward graduation, ordination, and future service in the church.

Life Worlds Compared

The previous section discussed six distinctive motifs of the student experience of NCTS. These motifs were present in more than one theme of the life worlds of students and were present in the discourse of both first- and second-career students. This section addresses this study's third research question, How do the systems of thought described by first- and second-career seminarians compare? The section discusses the similarities and differences between the life worlds of first- and second-career students in three ways. First, the researcher discusses the similarities and differences in timbre between constituencies and probes the data to argue for a more refined picture of the timbre for some affinities than was reported in chapter four. Second, the researcher compares the group mindmaps, or conceptual systems, of the two constituencies and contrasts them with the mindmap of an atypical study participant. Finally, the section concludes with a discussion of the three distinctive sub-themes discovered during interviews, the sub-themes of sexism (distinctive to second-career students), technology (only voiced by first-career students), and cases of extreme emotion (discovered in this study only in second-career participants).

Timbre Comparisons

This section analyzes similarities and differences between the two constituencies by looking in depth at the timbre for each affinity. Timbre describes the range of variation experienced by participants. This section first compares affinities for which the modal timbre rating was the same for first- and second-career students. Then the four affinities with differing modal timbre values are discussed.

Affinities With Same Modal Timbre

Chapter four presented the researcher's analysis of the timbre voiced by each participant. When aggregated by constituency (as summarized in Table 24, *Modal Affinity Timbre Value, By Constituency*), the modal affinity timbre value was the same for first- and second-career students for eight out of 12 affinities. Table 28 below reports these eight cases, sorted by position in the system (driver zone, mid-system, and outcome zone).The timbre for both first- and second-career students was positive for two affinities in the driver zone. Thus, according to informants, School Bureaucracy (understood both as administrative procedures and persons engaged in bureaucratic functions) positively influenced their seminary experience, as did Faculty and Staff.

Table 28

Affinities with the Same Modal Timbre Values, By System Position

System Position	Affinity	Timbre Value
Driver zone	School bureaucracy	Positive
	Faculty and staff	Positive
	Facilities	Neutral
Mid-system	Academic program	Positive
	Community	Positive
	Call to ministry*	Positive
Outcome zone	Ministry*	Positive
	Transformation	Positive

*Call to Ministry was an outcome for first-career students. Ministry was a mid-system element for first-career students.

Respondents in both constituencies also agreed that Facilities were influential, the last element in the driver zone (first-third) of their respective group mindmaps. Participants in both constituencies agreed that classrooms and the library were adequate, but they felt that student housing was sub-par and that housing policies, procedures, and

rates were confusing or unfair. Although the modal value was neutral for both constituencies (as reported in Table D4 in Appendix D and repeated here as Table 29), a change of a single rating from neutral in either system would change the mode. Upon further analysis, it appears that there is no dominant timbre to report for the affinity Facilities. Student opinion was scattered.

Table 29

Timbre Ratings, Facilities

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	2	2
Neutral	3	3
Negative	2	1
Total number of ratings	7	6
Mode	Neutral	Neutral

Participants in both constituencies agreed in modal timbre for two mid-system affinities, Community and Academic Program. Although there was variation in the timbre for Community (e.g., commuter students took part in fewer on-campus activities), the modal value for first- and second-career students was positive. In general, students had positive relationships with other students. By and large, participants held a positive view of the Academic Program despite reporting that robust engagement with the program absorbed most of their time and energy.

Finally, participants in both constituencies agreed in the modal timbre value of the affinities Call to Ministry, Ministry, and Transformation. The dominant value was positive. Students valued ministry opportunities, which gave them practical experience in pastoral work. As reported in detail in chapter four, students reported that they were

changed by acquiring new theological knowledge, pastoral skills, and refinement of their perceptions of their individual calls to ministry.

Affinities With Differing Modal Timbres

When aggregated by constituency, the modal affinity timbre value differed for first- and second-career students for four out of 12 affinities. Table 30 below reports these four cases, sorted by position in the system (driver zone, mid-system, and outcome zone). This section discusses these four affinities.

Table 30

Affinities with the Differing Modal Timbre Values, By Constituency and System Position

Affinity	System Position	First-Career Mode	Second-Career Mode
Church requirements	Driver zone	Positive; negative	Neutral; negative
Spirituality	Mid-system	Positive; neutral	Positive
Life management	Outcome zone	Positive; neutral	Negative
Emotions	Outcome zone	Volatile	Negative

Church Requirements. In the mindmaps for both constituencies, the affinity Church Requirements was a driver that exerted influence on many other affinities in the system. Based on analysis of interview transcripts, there were two modal values for this affinity in both constituencies (Table 31).

Table 31

Timbre Ratings, Church Requirements

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	3	1
Neutral	1	4
Negative	3	4
Total number of ratings	7	9
Mode	Positive; negative	Neutral; negative

Many second-career students reported that their experience of Church Requirements was neutral. Many first-career students reported a positive experience with

Church Requirements. They often reported that they received support from their oversight committees and affirmed the value of processes leading to ordination. Many first- and second-career students, on the other had, reported a negative experience with Church Requirements. In some cases, the requirements were unclear to informants. In others, the church's processes seemed merely to create another set of hoops or barriers to pass through on the way to ordination. For some second-career women, the road to ordination by a church body was difficult or impossible because of sexism. In two cases, church practices formally barred women from becoming ordained as ministers.

An enhanced picture of the timbre of this affinity emerges when timbre values are sorted by constituency and denominational affiliation, as shown in Table 32. Of all

Table 32

Church Requirements, Timbre Values, By Denominational Affiliation and Constituency

Rating	First-Career PCUSA	Second-Career PCUSA	All PCUSA	First-Career Other Churches	Second-Career Other Churches	All Other Churches
Positive	1	0	1	2	1	3
Neutral	1	2	3	0	3	3
Negative	3	1	4	0	3	3
Total	5	3	8	2	7	9

participants affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), only one out of eight reported a positive timbre for Church Requirements. Half of the ratings for members of the PCUSA were negative. Taken together, participants affiliated with other churches had more ratings of positive timbre (three out of four positive ratings). The researcher scored negative timbre ratings for members of the PCUSA (four out of eight) and other churches (three out of nine) at similar rates. The ratings for participants who were not members of the PCUSA were evenly distributed across possible ratings. It appears that

differences in timbre for the affinity Church Requirements between PCUSA participants and non-PCUSA participants were as important as any differences between first- and second-career students. Thus, it does not appear justified to assert that whether a student belonged to one constituency or another was a significant factor in that individual's particular experience of Church Requirements.

Spirituality. The second affinity for which modal timbre values differed by constituency was Spirituality. Table 33 repeats the data reported in Appendix D (Table D7). For first-career students, the modal values were positive (3 ratings) and neutral (3 ratings). For second-career students, the modal value was positive (5 ratings).

Table 33

Timbre Ratings, Spirituality

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	3	5
Neutral	3	3
Negative	1	0
Total number of ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive; neutral	Positive

However, all other values were neutral (3 ratings). In cases where the researcher assigned a value of neutral for participants in both constituencies, the reason was that students expressed frustration at the challenge of engaging in a healthy pattern of spiritual disciplines in the face of competing demands for their time. The change of a single rating from neutral to positive in the first-career constituency would yield the same mode (positive) for both constituencies. There appears to be very little difference in how first- and second-career students in this study experienced Spirituality. In both cases, there

were almost no negative ratings, and remaining ratings were almost evenly split between neutral and positive.

Life management. The third affinity for which modal timbre values differed by constituency was Life Management. Table 34 repeats the data reported in Appendix D (Table D10). For first-career students (n=7), the modal values were positive (3 ratings) and neutral (3 ratings). For second-career students (n=8), the modal value was negative (4 ratings). Participants of both constituencies affirmed that they had very little life outside of NCTS. Second-career participants, however, more commonly expressed frustration at the effects of seminary education on spouses, children, and other commitments. Second-career participants had a higher proportion of timbre ratings of negative despite the fact that in only two cases did these respondents have children living in their household. Thus, it appears unlikely that the difference in modal timbre can be explained by the very real day-to-day demands of raising children.

Table 34

Timbre Ratings, Life Management

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	3	2
Neutral	3	2
Negative	1	4
Total number of ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive; neutral	Negative

Two second-career participants whose timbre was scored as negative were actively employed as professionals (one was an engineer, another a lawyer) while attending school. These informants were multiple-role students (Apps, 1988). Put in terms of ecological theory, they were actively engaged in several microsystems in

addition to the student world of NCTS. By and large, the first-career students, on the other hand, were single-purpose students for whom the student world of NCTS was their predominant microsystem. Based on this analysis, it appears that the experience of Life Management was more negative for second-career students than for first-career students.

Emotions. The final affinity for which modal timbre values differed by constituency was Emotions. Table 35 repeats the timbre rating data reported in Appendix D (Table D12). For first-career students (n=7), the modal value was volatile (5 ratings). For these participants, feelings ranged from highly positive emotions (joy, peace) to highly negative emotions (primarily frustration). These participants reported that emotions changed like waves in the ocean. Their dominant feelings changed based on the pattern of the school's academic demands semester by semester. By contrast, for second-career students (n=8), the modal value was negative (4 ratings). For more than half of second-career participants, the primary emotions experienced were negative. Second-career students wrestled with significant issues such as concerns over academic ability, grief, and family of origin issues.

Table 35

Timbre Ratings, Emotions

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	1	2
Neutral	1	0
Negative	0	4
Volatile	5	1
Total number of ratings	7	7
Mode	Volatile	Negative

According to life course theory, certain times of life are associated with certain events and tasks (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Baltes, Reese, and Lipsett (1980) distinguish between normative and non-normative events. The section discussing the distinctive sub-theme of extreme emotions (below) will suggest how ecological theory explains the distinct difference in timbre for the affinity Emotions discovered between first- and second-career students.

Summary. The modal timbre was the same for both constituencies with respect to eight out of 12 affinities. These affinities were located in all three parts of the conceptual system. For instance, the modal timbre for the driver Faculty and Staff was positive. The timbre for Transformation, an outcome, was also positive for both first- and second-career students. Upon further analysis, the dominant timbre for the driver Church Requirements appeared not to vary by constituency but was associated with whether or not a participant was a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The modal timbre value differed by constituency for four affinities. Upon further investigation, however, there appeared to be little difference between constituencies in the timbre of Spirituality. Ratings were almost evenly split between neutral and positive. The presence or absence of children in a student's household did not affect the timbre of the affinity Life Management.

Table 36

Dominant Affinity Timbre Value, By Constituency

Affinity	First-career	Second-career
Church requirements		
School bureaucracy	Positive	Positive
Faculty and staff	Positive	Positive
Facilities		
Academic program	Positive	Positive
Spirituality	Neutral to positive	Neutral to positive
Community	Positive	Positive
Ministry	Positive	Positive
Call to ministry	Positive	Positive
Life management*	Positive; neutral	Negative
Emotions*	Volatile	Negative
Transformation	Positive	Positive

*Affinities for which dominant values differ between the two constituencies.

Table 36 presents a list of dominant timbres, removing modal values in cases where analysis suggests that ratings are scattered or that differences in timbre are not primarily due to membership in one constituency or another. The dominant timbre values differ between the constituencies for only two affinities, Life Management and Emotions. Figure 20 presents the mindmaps for first- and second-career students, showing the results of this timbre analysis.

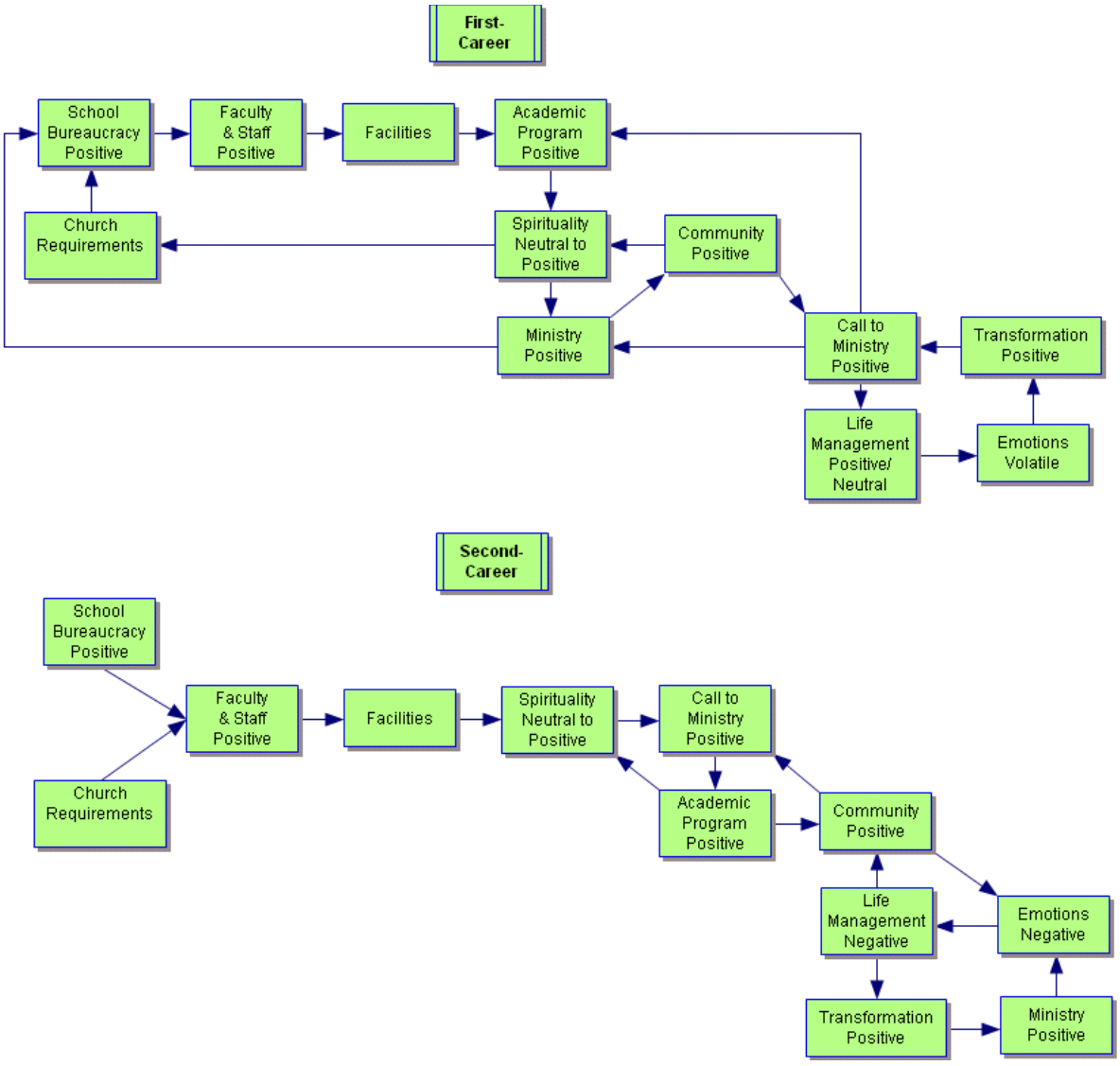

Figure 20

Group Mindmaps Showing Dominant Timbre, If Any

Systemic Comparisons

The IQA approach (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) understands the life worlds of constituents as coherent, albeit complex, systems. This section interprets the life worlds of first- and second-career seminarians by comparing systems in four ways. First, the systems are compared in terms of their general shape, or flow of influence between affinities. Second, the researcher substitutes a single super affinity (cluster of affinities), Engagement, into both systems, in order to shed more light on the importance that participants placed on various ways of investing themselves in school. Third, the group mindmaps are compared with the mindmap of an atypical participant. Finally, the researcher uses three more super affinities to interpret the life world of NCTS students as transformed satisficers.

Shape

The second research question of this study asked how first- and second-career seminarians relate the themes of their seminary experience into a system of thought, or mindmap. Using IQA methods, the researcher produced mindmaps and made judgments about the dominant timbre, if any, for each constituency. As depicted graphically in Figure 20, the two mindmaps have very similar shapes. In both systems, Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy are drivers, exerting influences on many other elements in the system. For both first- and second-career students, there was no dominant timbre value for Church Requirements. Student experience varied widely. The dominant timbre value for School Bureaucracy was positive, as was the dominant timbre for Faculty and Staff. The affinity Facilities was located in a similar position for both constituencies, but had no dominant timbre. The dominant timbre values for mid-system

elements in both mindmaps were generally positive. The dominant timbre for Spirituality was neutral to positive. The dominant timbre for outcomes was the same (positive) for the affinity Transformation. Second-career students, however, had a negative dominant timbre for Emotions, while the dominant timbre for first-career students was volatile for the same affinity.

In the systems of both constituencies, the affinity Community is a mid-system element which is part of two feedback loops. For instance, in the first-career mindmap, Community is part of a loop with Spirituality and Ministry. Similarly, in the second-career mindmap, Community is part of a feedback loop with Call to Ministry and Academic Program. From an IQA perspective, this suggests that a change in the dominant timbre for this affinity (e.g., from positive to negative) could exert influence on other affinities.

While the two systems have the same general shape, there are more recursive elements in the first-career mindmap compared to the second-career mindmap. In the first-career mindmap, there is a link from Call to Ministry (an outcome) back to Academic Program and Ministry, both mid-system elements. There is also a link from the mid-system element Ministry to the driver School Bureaucracy. By contrast, no elements in the second-career system have recursive links from mid-system elements to drivers. It is possible to trace a flow of influence back in the second-career system from the outcomes through Community, from Community to Academic Program, and then to Spirituality, all mid-system elements. From an IQA perspective, it may be the case that the number of recursive links in the first-career system is an indication of how these younger students are attempting to make sense of all the elements of their seminary

experience and to exert what influence they can on those who hold power over them, such as school officials. The relative lesser amount of recursion in the second-career mindmap is consistent with the comment made during an interview with one second-career seminarian who said, as she stated that affinity after affinity exerted influence on Life Management and Emotions, "I can see now that very few things in my seminary experience are under my control."

Engagement

Analysis of student discourse (reported earlier in this chapter) revealed that students of both constituencies stressed the important role of student engagement in the seminary experience. Students reported that engagement was necessary to maintain one's spiritual life, navigate the academic program, and be part of community life. The best kind of learning, for many, was experiential learning. In both systems, these affinities sit in the middle of the system. By substituting the super affinity *Engagement* for mid-system elements, the systems are transformed as shown in Figure 21. This substitution highlights the value that engagement has in life worlds of these participants. Engagement becomes the mediating term between elements that drive student experience and valuable outcomes such as Transformation. As figure 21 shows, there is a return flow of influence from outcomes to Engagement. In the transformed mindmap for first-career seminarians, there is recursion back to the driver School Bureaucracy. The life worlds of students at NCTS are dynamic.

The Typical versus the Atypical Seminarian

The premise of IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) is that group mindmaps point to the life worlds of typical members of a given constituency. To provide further insight

into what this study found to be the typical way for participants to understand their lives as students, this section reports on an atypical participant, the first-career participant Niles Stalworth. Figure 22 displays his mindmap, which diverged the most from the common experience of participants in this study (Figure 20).

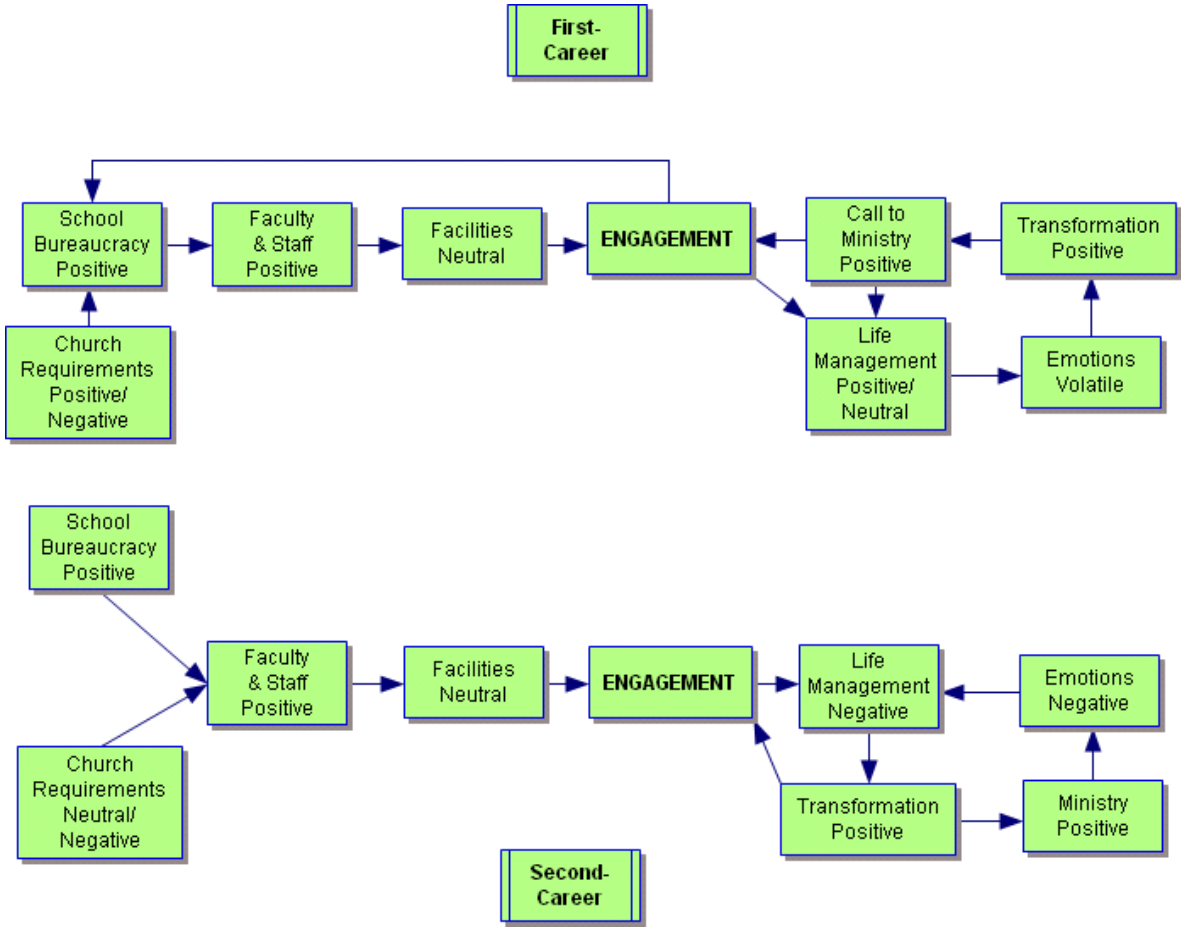

Figure 21

Group Mindmaps with Super Affinity Engagement in Place

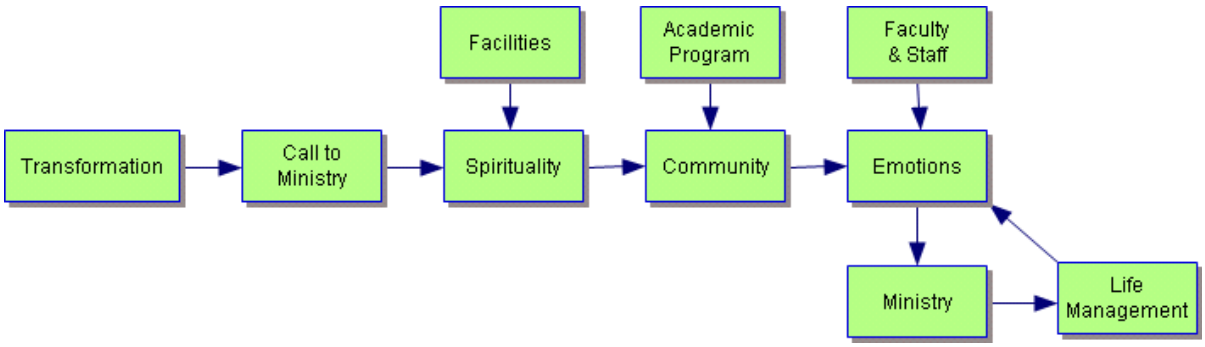

Figure 22

Mindmap of Atypical Participant

For Niles Stalworth, the primary driver was Transformation, which was an outcome for most participants. A second important driver was Call to Ministry, which was a mid-system element for second-career participants and an outcome for typical first-career students. The Stalworth system lacks the affinities Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy entirely. Both were drivers for typical participants. When interviewed, Mr. Stalworth reported that everything in his life was driven by his conversion experience, call to ministry in a parachurch organization for young people, and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He placed these formative experiences under the categories of Transformation and Call to Ministry. Although he complied with the seminary's policies and procedures (which he found efficient and unobtrusive), he denied that they exerted influence on other affinities. He also denied that the academic program of NCTS changed him in any significant way. He understood engagement with the curriculum primarily as a process of hearing liberal theological views, discerning what parts of them fit his existing worldview (which he called theologically conservative) and which did not. Unlike many interviewed, Mr. Stalworth did not find reason to be

changed by theological ideas that were new to him. This aloofness from engagement with new ideas is consistent with the relatively modest influence exerted on his experience by Faculty and Staff, which is a mid-system element in his mindmap but a driver for typical participants of both constituencies. As a charismatic Christian in the free church tradition, Niles Stalworth did not have the same formal denominational expectations for training and credentialing as other participants, who belonged to denominations with well-established preparation for ministry programs. During his interview, Mr. Stalworth stated that the affinity Church Requirements exerted no influence on his seminary experience.

Despite the several ways in which the mindmap for this participant diverges from what was typical, the affinities Emotions, Life Management, and Ministry are also outcomes in this system. In the seminary experience at NCTS, a person's feelings and life outside of seminary are powerfully shaped by other aspects of seminary life. Unlike Mr. Stalworth's experience, most participants reported that engaging in seminary changed them (Transformation) and changed their understandings of their vocation (Call to Ministry).

An Overview of the Life World of NCTS Students

This study focused on comparing the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students. Despite some differences (e.g., the dominant timbre of the affinity Emotions was volatile for first-career seminarians, but negative for second-career seminarians), the results of this study show many similarities in student life worlds understood as systems. This section interprets the life world of NCTS students further by substituting super affinities in the driver and outcome zones of a combined mindmap. Thus understood, the conceptual world of an NCTS student is comprised of the Academy

and the Church influencing Engagement, leading to the outcome of the individual as a Transformed Satisficer. Figure 23 below depicts this system.

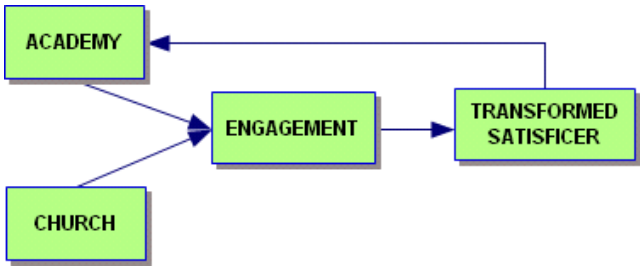

Figure 23

Group Mindmap of Typical NCTS Student with Super Affinities in Place

In Figure 23, two super affinities are drivers. As experienced by seminarians, church and the academy influence engagement. Various church requirements necessary for ordination and the school's faculty and policies influence students. Students engage these drivers through their spirituality, relationships with other students, the school's curriculum, and reflection on their calls to ministry. In the process, students are changed. They make difficult decisions about their use of time and relationships outside of school and feel a wide range of emotions. Most importantly of all, they acquire new knowledge and skills. In this system, there is recursion from the outcome (student as transformed satisficer) back to the super affinity Academy. In other words, the model suggests that, as students are changed, they bring their change perspectives to bear on their relationships with faculty, staff, and administrators. Thus, the seminary experience looks less like a straightforward progression from the simple to the complex or naiveté to maturity than like an iterative web of sense-making.

The Seminary Experience: Distinctive Sub-themes

The previous section used super affinities to provide a broad interpretation of the life worlds of NCTS students, consistent with the shape of group mindmaps. This overview emphasized what first- and second-career seminarians had in common. In contrast, this section discusses three distinctive sub-themes that, in interviews, were only voiced by members of one constituency or another. The existence of these sub-themes demonstrates ways in which the life worlds of first- and second-career seminarians differ. These themes are technology, sexism in the church, and extreme emotions.

Technology

During interviews, only first-career students commented on the learning technology available to them at New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS). According to first-career students, learning technology at NCTS "was a little bit outdated," due in part to the limits of the electrical system in academic buildings. Students did acknowledge that the school's administration had made technological improvements, such as creating a student computer lab and providing power strips for plugging in laptop computers in the library. No second-career students made remarks about learning technology. According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008) and Prensky (2001a, 2001b), persons in the United States born in the late 1980s or later grew up using a wealth of information technology for homework (e.g., word processing software), recreation (e.g., videogames), and maintaining friendships (text-messaging, using Facebook). They are *digital natives*. By contrast, those born earlier are *digital immigrants*, for whom learning to use information technology (and to keep up with the endless changes in operating systems, interfaces, and digital resources) is the rough equivalent of learning to speak a second

language as an adult. Because digital natives have been surrounded by such technology as cell phones and the Internet, they perceive technology as utterly normal and are surprised when it is unavailable or is not up to current standards. Thus, the sub-theme of technology is linked to the difference in ages between the two constituencies of this study. In terms of ecological theory, information technology is an exosystemic influence on the life worlds of contemporary persons with far-reaching implications (Borgmann, 1992; Watson, 2009). For first-career students, information technology pervades (or should pervade) all microsystems in their lives. Discussions among theological educators about the appropriateness of using various kinds of educational technology in seminary education (Blier, 2008; Delamater, 2005; Hess, 2005) are, in large measure, discussions among digital immigrants who are called upon to teach increasing numbers of digital natives.

Sexism in the Church

As reported in detail in chapter four as part of the affinity Call to Ministry, three second-career women reported that their aspirations to engage in ministry were limited because of sexism in the church. No male informants explicitly talked about sexism during interviews. A Missionary Baptist woman stated that her church did not allow women to become pastors of congregations, although they could be assistants. A Korean woman reported that ordained ministry was an option for women in the Presbyterian church in Korea, but that in practice there were many barriers to engaging in that calling. A United Methodist woman reported on a double-standard for appointing ministers in her district (in violation of church policy), in which the family needs of male ministers were given preference over the family needs of female ministers. The participants did not

report instances of sexism involving New Creation Theological Seminary staff or other students.

In this study, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews of nine women. One-third of them commented on sexism in the church. Christians make theological arguments about the appropriateness of ordaining women as pastors and enforce policies based on those arguments (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, 2008; Morgan, 2003). There is a literature about the so-called stained-glass ceiling (Purvis, 1995) that limits opportunities for women in ministry, even in denominations that have promoted the ordination of women as pastors for more than 25 years (Becker, 2000; Chang, 1997; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Zikmund, Lummis, & Change 1998). While the average salary for pastors in mainline congregations is practically identical for women and men, experienced women pastors still serve fewer large churches than their male colleagues (Carroll, 2006). The results of this study are consistent with earlier research demonstrating that patriarchy continues to reproduce itself in the church (Chong, 2008; Daly, 2006).

Extreme Emotions and the Normative Events of Aging

As reported in detail in chapter four, one sub-theme of the affinity Emotions was extreme cases. In this study, three second-career students had atypical emotional experiences in seminary. A male participant who began seminary study at age 57 dropped out of school because of a combination of the stress of engaging in the academic program combined with the posting of his son to serve in the American army in Afghanistan. "Things got on top of me so bad, I had to drop my classes and leave. I couldn't stand it." After his son returned from his tour in Afghanistan safely, and after the participant had had his sense of call reaffirmed through continued ministry experiences, he returned to

study at NCTS. A female participant began seminary study at age 57, only a few weeks after her husband's death. He had, on his deathbed, confirmed her call to ministry, a "huge" sign in her Missionary Baptist tradition. She stated that she "was in deep grief" and experienced "a lot of guilt because of my husband's death" as she began seminary study. She "retreated into seminary work."

These two second-career participants were enduring life transitions that, while difficult, are associated with aging. Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1979, 2005) notes that many individuals pass through similar transitions at approximately the same age. Baltes, Reese, and Lipsett (1980) distinguish between *normative* and *non-normative* events. A normative event is commonly experienced (e.g., most people in the United States get a driver's license). Non-normative events occur with less predictability (e.g., losing a job). Normative age-graded events tend to happen to all individuals who attain a certain age, such as starting kindergarten or retirement. The stress caused by having a son or daughter deployed into military combat happens to parents whose children are old enough to serve in the armed forces. The death of a spouse and grief are common events for married persons, especially as they age. Because women, on average, live longer than men, widowhood is a common experience for many women (Silverman, 2004). In 2006, 43 percent of American women over age 65 were widows (Administration on Aging, 2007). In Baltes, Reese, and Lipsett's terms, sending a son to war and the death of a spouse are normative, age-graded events. From the perspective of ecological theory, these two participants underwent stressful shifts in roles as they took on the new role of student and the new setting of the seminary. Moving into the new

NCTS microsystem, however, did not cut off connections with family nor lessen the need for mourning.

Another woman, who enrolled at NCTS at age 39, called wrestling with psychological issues "the Ph.D. work of seminary." She worked with a professional counselor to address psychological issues related to her upbringing and struggled to separate her self-worth from her ability to perform well academically. She even opted out of letter grading for coursework, when possible, because she had decided that distinguishing her engagement with course material from the pursuit of high grades was part of her spiritual discipline. Reflection on childhood experiences and coming to grips with one's changing sense of self is often a psychological task for those in their 30s or 40s (Fowler, 1981). In terms of life-span theory, this difficult work is also age-graded and normative.

Life Worlds Compared: Summary of System Comparisons

This major section compared the life worlds of first- and second-career seminarians. When viewed as systems, the group mindmaps for both constituencies had the same general shape. The same four affinities (Church Requirements, School Bureaucracy, Faculty and Staff, and Facilities) were drivers. The same cluster of three affinities (Transformation, Emotions, and Life Management) were outcomes. The remaining affinities were situated in the middle of the group mindmaps. Interpreted as systems, the life worlds of first- and second-career students are very similar. Both systems differed in shape when compared to the mindmap of an atypical study participant for whom Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy exerted no influence at all. Specific affinities in the life worlds of both constituencies shared a common dominant

timbre in most cases. Participants from both constituencies, for example, had positive experiences with Faculty and Staff. Participants from both constituencies also had positive experiences of Transformation. Six motifs were also common to participants in both constituencies. For instance, both first- and second-career seminarians were pressed for time and practiced satisficing.

The conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students differed in three key ways. First, first-career students reported that they experienced wide swings of emotion depending on the demands of the school calendar. By contrast, second-career students did not report as much variation. Second, second-career students generally reported feeling frustration as they sought to balance family obligations and going to school. First-career students were resigned to the devoting most of their time and energy to school and church expectations. Third, in three cases, participants in one constituency reported a sub-theme that was distinctive to it. Only first-career students commented on learning technology at NCTS, consistent with the expectations of digital natives. Only second-career students noted sexism in the church. The three cases of participants navigating especially stressful life transitions were distinctive to second-career students. These were age-graded normative events in terms of ecological theory.

So far, this chapter has interpreted the themes of the seminary experience voiced by first- and second-career students, noting how participants understand these themes as conceptual worlds or mindmaps. This analysis has addressed the first three research questions of this study. The next section interprets the data pertinent to this study's final research question.

New Creation Theological Seminary: The On-Message School

The fourth research question of this study concerned whether or not students at NCTS identified an over-arching or dominant message to their theological education. As reported in detail in chapter four, students reported a variety of such over-arching messages. Table 37 below repeats the results obtained regarding this research question. Two messages accounted for more than 75 percent of the responses. For first-career students, the dominant message was that NCTS promoted community. Thirty-five percent of first-career students identified this as the dominant message, and another 35 percent reported that the school promoted a message of both community and training. According to second-career students, the over-arching message was that NCTS provided professional training for ministry. Forty-two percent of second-career students reported that the dominant message was training. Twelve percent reported that the school

Table 37

Over-arching Message of NCTS, By Constituency (n=37)*

Message	First-Career Messages	First-Career Percentage of Messages	Second-Career Messages	Second-Career Percentage of Messages
Community	6	35	4	17
Training	2	12	10	42
Both community & training	6	35	3	12
Other messages	1	6	7	29
None	2	12	0	0
Total messages	17	100	24	100
Mode	Community		Training	

*Because some participants identified more than one over-arching message, the total number of messages reported is greater than 37.

promoted a message of training and community. This section interprets these two messages in light of the school's mission, in terms of the life-course development of students, and as a promise or implied contract with students.

School Mission Is The Message

The official mission statement of New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) affirmed that the school was committed to four things. The school trained persons for ministry. The school conducted theological research. The school served the church (in practice, with the emphasis on the denomination that has official relationships with the seminary). Finally, the school was committed to being an attractive, "exemplary community of God's people." Thus, the two messages frequently identified by participants in this study were aspects of the school's stated mission. First-career students affirmed the purpose of being an exemplary community of Christians. Second-career students affirmed the purpose of preparing individuals for ministry. NCTS appeared to be extremely effective at communicating its stated purpose to its student population, presumably through multiple channels (Berlo, 1960; Harris, 2002), although this research did not address how students came to conclude what the dominant message of their school was. First-career seminarian Niles Stalworth, whose mindmap was explored earlier in this chapter, was one of only two students who did not discern that the school had an over-arching message. "I don't know. If there's been a dominant message, I've missed it." Mr. Stalworth said in his interview that his seminary experience left him virtually unchanged and that he felt like an outsider because of his theological views. From the perspective of communication theory (Harris, 2002), Mr. Stalworth can be

understood as an isolate, an individual who for whatever reason is out of touch with the flow of communication in a given social group.

The Message is Community

Participants reported that the school "preached community, community, community." According to one first-career student, a banner on campus displayed part of the school's mission statement, "exemplary community." Participants reported that their experience of community began during Discernment Days, when they were first exposed to the school's culture of calling professors and administrators by their first names and their apparent concern to answer the questions of prospective students. One second-career participant reported that the staff advocated for the school to be an open, inclusive community. During the time that this study was conducted, students at NCTS played their annual touch football game with students from another seminary. The commemorative game T-shirt that students produced contained the text about exemplary community on the back of the shirt. For participants in this study, community referred to good interpersonal relationships with others and tolerance of differing theological convictions and denominational affiliation. As reported by informants, community did not refer to social activism or to an ideology of inclusiveness. Some students articulated a religious underpinning to community at NCTS: "We are an open community for people to come and discover God. . . . The [dominant] message is faith seeking understanding in community."

For most first-career participants, the over-arching message of NCTS was community. Thirty-five percent of first-career students said the central message of the

school was community. Another 35 percent said the central message was community and training.

The Message is Ministerial Training

NCTS also effectively communicated that the school cared about preparing individuals for ministry, or preparing "leaders for the kingdom of God." As reported in detail in chapter four, participants often praised the school's curriculum for being practical. Participants frequently affirmed that course content directly informed the work that ministers do. Participants especially praised Ministry Practicum (required for all M.Div. students) and Clinical Pastoral Education (taken by many students, sometimes because of a church requirement) as experiential, hands-on learning for ministry. Participants emphasized that NCTS prepared ministers "to preach and care for a specific congregation. . . . The school has the niche of preparing people for parish ministry. . . . We are challenged on many levels to get ready for real-world ministry."

For 42 percent of second-career participants, the over-arching message of NCTS was professional training for ministry. For another 12 percent, the central message was training for ministry and community. Based on the student interview data reported in depth in chapter four, training produced ministers with specific competencies. NCTS produced ministers who were able to lead worship and preach. The school's graduates had a firm grounding in the Reformed tradition and aspired to be, as one participant put it, "smart pastors." NCTS-educated ministers were aware of their limitations and understood the importance of being present with people in times of crisis. They valued parish life, with its rhythm of worship, education, and mutual support. This sketch of the kind of minister trained by NCTS is very similar to Carroll's (2006) findings about the

actual work of pastors in mainline denominations in the United States. “The core work of clergy can . . . be described under the classic rubrics used to characterize the pastoral office down through the years: celebrant of the sacraments, preacher and teacher (including pastoral care), and overseer of congregational life” (p. 125).Thus, the NCTS-trained minister appears to be much more like the non-judgmental humanistic professional that Kleinman (1984) discovered at Midwest Seminary than the zealous advocate for social justice that Mainline Seminary sought to produce (Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, & Marler, 1997).

Ecological Theory and the Two Messages

As the data in Table 37 document, student perception of the dominant message varied by constituency. This section offers a possible explanation, rooted in ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1979, 2005), for why younger participants heard one over-arching message and older students heard another. The modal message identified by first-career students was the message of community. As reported in detail in chapter four, the timbre value for the affinity Community was positive for both first- and second-career students. However, the timbre for Life Management for first-career students had more ratings of positive than the researcher discovered for second-career students. It is possible that first-career students were more resigned than second-career students to the way that pursuing theological education consumed most of their time and shrank life outside of seminary. First-career seminarians were willing to pay the price that engagement in the seminary community required. In terms of ecological theory, first-career students spent more of their time in a single microculture, the seminary, than did second-career students who more frequently reported working off campus and raising children. It is plausible to

suggest that time spent in the workplace micro-system and the family micro-system by second-career students diluted the impact of micro-systems centered on the seminary, closely construed as the community of students, faculty, and staff. Thus, seminary-centered micro-systems more thoroughly socialized first-career participants to be community members, i.e., seminary students.

The modal message identified by second-career students was professional training. The dominant timbre ratings for both constituencies were the same for several affinities related to the idea of professional training. For both constituencies, the dominant timbre for the affinities Academic Program, Call to Ministry, Ministry, and Transformation was positive. However, second-career students had a negative dominant timbre for Life Management and Emotions. In terms of ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005), it is plausible that the varied life experiences of second-career students shaped how they received an over-arching message to their theological education. Second-career students had spent prolonged time in non-seminary micro-systems before attending seminary (30 years as an oil-field worker in one case, several years practicing law in another). Some also spent more time outside the NCTS community while in school. These experiences throughout life in various other microcultures contributed to the second-career view that, as one participant put it, "seminary is a season of life" that eventually is replaced by the transition to ministry. Second-career participants commonly took the long view, understanding that the over-arching message of NCTS was instrumental, training for ministry. In ecological terms, they were aware of their own chronosystems and somewhat less influenced by seminary-centered micro-systems while in school. Although both the community message and the

training message are part of the mission statement of NCTS, it appears that participants frequently received and filtered that message—the communications phenomenon of selectivity (Harris, 2002)—as they did because of their place in the life course.

Messages as Implied Contract

It is possible to understand the two over-arching messages received by participants in this study simply as aspects of the school's mission statement. Thus construed, New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS) was very successful in putting its mission statement into practice. (As reported in detail in chapter four, the seminary was less successful in communicating some of its policies to students.) The previous section argued that the place of students in their life course influenced why the younger students heard a dominant message about community while the older students heard a dominant message about professional training that would lead to serving others. This section argues that student reception and reaction to the over-arching message also makes sense when the dominant message is understood to be a promise or implied psychological contract in which the two parties are the seminary and the student.

Rouseau (1989, 1995) argued that organizations create unwritten contracts between themselves and their members. Employers in a firm make promises to employees. A school makes unwritten contracts with its students. These contracts create psychological expectations about what individuals think they are entitled to receive from an organization. Thus, in a firm, employees may believe that if they work hard, they will receive performance bonuses or promotions. Organizations create such psychological contracts even when written contracts make no such promises. Rouseau's research found that psychological contracts exert influence on the thinking and behavior of individuals.

According to the participants in this study, New Creation Theological Seminary promoted messages about the school that functioned as promises or psychological contracts. In many cases in the study, students believed that the school kept its part of the bargain. The seminary nurtured positive relationships between students (the over-arching message received by first-career students) and provided high-quality training for pastors (the over-arching message received by second-career students). Some participants, however, concluded that the school breached its contract. Some students lamented that they were promised one kind of community but experienced another kind. Some students lamented that the school promised training for ministry but that the training received was impractical. As one participant put it pointedly, "If I'd wanted to be a biblical scholar, I would have gone to Princeton. I came to NCTS. I want to be a minister." In both cases, the school appeared to breach its psychological contract, as happens in other organizations (Bocchino, Hartman, & Foley, 2003; Montes & Irving, 2008; Robinson, 1996).

The Over-Arching Messages of NCTS: Summary

In this study, participants heard two dominant messages promoted by NCTS. Both of these messages are aspects of the school's mission statement. Life-span theory offers plausible reasons for why first-career students received a dominant message about community and second-career students received a dominant message about training for ministry. Both messages functioned as an implied promise or psychological contract between the seminary and its students.

Study Results and Published Literature on Seminary Students

Previous sections of this chapter have discussed the meaning of this study's results by analyzing systemic relationships of constituency mindmaps, comparing the dominant timbres of affinities of the seminary experience, and discussing the two over-arching messages that participants identified for their theological education at NCTS. This major section puts study results in conversation with previously published literature about North American seminary students. First, this section relates study results to the data regularly compiled by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Second, this section compares results with the ethnographies of Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) and Kleinman (1984). Finally, this section proposes modifications to the Students in Seminary model presented in chapter two (Table 12).

ATS Data and Study Results

As summarized in chapter two, the Association for Theological Schools (ATS) regularly surveys seminary students about various aspects of their theological education. In this section, study results are compared to ATS data about why students engage in seminary study, important educational influences while at seminary, and the value of field education.

Called to Seminary Study

Table 5 in chapter two reported on factors that were important to students when making a decision to attend seminary (Association of Theological Schools, Table 15, 2005; Table 15, 2008). The most frequently reported factor was the experience of a call from God. In this study, *all* participants interviewed spoke about their perception that God was calling them into some form of ministry. As reported in detail in chapter four,

sometimes the sense of call developed slowly over time. In other cases, participants recalled specific events in which they received an intuition pointing them in the direction of Christian ministry. Another factor identified as important by students in ATS data was the desire to discern God's will. In this study, students talked about how they sought confirmation of a call from pastors and other church members. Participants also spoke about how their perception of call changed over time during their seminary experience as the result of exposure to new theological ideas, engaging in field work in hospitals and congregations, and through conversations with professors. Because this study used IQA, further texture is added to ATS survey results that simply report the frequencies with which respondents reported the relative importance of various factors. According to this research, one's perception of call to ministry not only influenced why an individual began seminary study, but one's call to ministry was further shaped (and sometimes redirected) by the seminary experience.

Moreover, the results of this study suggest that some factors singled out as distinct by the ATS approach to asking questions are, in the minds of participants, part of larger ongoing processes. For instance, in the ATS data (Association of Theological Schools, Table 15, 2005; Table 15, 2008), experiencing a call from God was rated as "important," but the experience of the community of a local church was rated as "somewhat important." These are two separate questions. Participants in this study, however, talked about how the local church assisted them in testing and refining their senses of call. Some participants also spoke about how Church Requirements aided student discernment of call, which participants understood not only as a calling to an office in the church (an ordained pastor or minister), but also as a calling to a specific kind of ministry (youth

leader, associate pastor, solo pastor, etc.). The results of this study point to how students themselves understood the relationships between a call from God as intuition, call as a slowly developing perception (in some cases), and call as explicitly affirmed by others. Table 38 combines factors from the ATS questionnaire under the headings of the affinities discovered in this study.

Student perceptions in this study reflect a point in time in the second or third year of their seminary careers. When the affinities of this study are associated with the ATS survey factors that led individuals to enter seminary, a single factor, "to discern God's will," is associated with a driver (Church Requirements). Most factors are associated with mid-system elements (e.g., Spirituality) or outcomes (Transformation). The results of this study point to the continuing plasticity of individual understandings of their calls to ministry while in school. Such a call was the prime motive for entering seminary, but almost all participants reported that their sense of call evolved as they continued seminary study. This plasticity may explain why Wheeler, Miller, and Aleshire (2007) found that student interest in parish ministry was higher at the end of seminary than at the start. Seminary changes student perceptions of call. Based on the results of this study, interpreters of ATS data should be cautious about presuming that experiencing a call from God is simply an input or prologue to seminary education.

Educational Influences Reconsidered

Table 7 in chapter two summarized ATS data on a second question. Respondents were asked to list the three most important influences on their educational experiences (Association of Theological Schools, Table 15, 2004; Table 15, 2007b). The premise underlying such a form of asking the question is that responses with the highest

Table 38

Factors in Student Decision to Pursue Theological Education, by Affinity

Factor (ATS Questionnaire)	Affinity	System Position
Experienced call from God	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Desire to serve others	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
To discern God's will	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
	Church requirements	Driver
Experience of the community life of a local church	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Encouragement of clergy	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Experience of pastoral counseling/spiritual direction	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system(second-career)
Influence of family or spouse	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
	Life management	Outcome
Search for meaning in life	Call to ministry Spirituality	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Experience in campus Christian organization	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Major life event (e.g., a death, divorce)	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Opportunity for study/growth	Academic program Transformation	Mid-system Outcome
Intellectual interest in religious/theological questions	Academic program Transformation	Mid-system Outcome
Desire to make a difference in life of church	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Influence of friend(s)	Call to ministry	Outcome (first-career); Mid-system (second-career)
Desire to preserve traditions of the church		
Desire to administer the sacraments		

Based on Association of Theological Schools, Table 15 (2005, 2008)

frequency are more important than responses with lower frequencies. Thus, a plausible conclusion is that Faculty is the single most influential factor in theological education because, according to ATS surveys over time, approximately twice as many students chose this item as the next commonest item on the list, interaction with fellow students. The IQA approach (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) used in this study provides an alternative way to ask questions about educational influences. Instead of asking about the three most important influences, the interview protocol asked about 12 affinities identified by participants in focus groups. The mindmaps produced allow respondents to describe their experience of all 12 affinities and their inter-relationships, not simply the three perceived retrospectively as most influential.

Table 39 compares top educational influences from the ATS questionnaire with the affinities, or major themes, discovered in this study. Every educational influence from the ATS questionnaire logically relates to one or more affinities in this study. The ATS question about Faculty relates to a driver in the mindmaps (Faculty and Staff). Several questions are associated with the affinity Community, which was situated in the mid-system range of the mindmaps for both first- and second-career participants. The ATS questions about field work and ministry experiences (which were commonly reported as influential in the 2004 and 2007 survey of graduates) were situated in the mid-system or outcome zone of the mindmaps. While it may be valuable to ask students to choose the most influential aspects of their theological education, the results of this study suggest that even factors with relatively lower frequency in the ATS data may, in fact, shape the life worlds of students and lead to desirable changes in ministerial skills, increased theological knowledge, and a more focused sense of call. Additionally, influential factors

Table 39

Most Important Educational Influences, By Affinity

Educational Influence (ATS Questionnaire)	Affinity	System Position
Spiritual formation	Spirituality	Mid-system
Worship/liturgy	Spirituality	Mid-system
Field education/internship	Ministry	Mid-system (first-career) Outcome (second-career)
	Transformation	Outcome
Experiences in ministry	Ministry	Mid-system (first-career) Outcome (second-career)
	Transformation	Outcome
Personal life experiences	Life Management	Outcome
Faculty	Faculty and staff	Driver
	Educational program	Mid-system
Biblical studies	Educational program	Mid-system
	Transformation	Outcome
Study of history and theology	Educational program	Mid-system
	Transformation	Outcome
Classroom discussion	Educational program	Mid-system
Required reading	Educational program	Mid-system
	Transformation	Outcome
Interaction with fellow students	Community	Mid-system
Differences in perspective	Community	Mid-system
Multi-ethnic/cultural contacts	Community	Mid-system
Community life of school	Community	Mid-system
Ecumenical interaction	Community	Mid-system

Based on Association of Theological Schools, Table 15 (2004, 2007b)

may be lodged as outcomes in a mindmap. An affinity's location within a mindmap is not an indication of its relative importance, but of how it is related to the other affinities in the system. The IQA approach (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) used in this study thus suggests how students relate various educational influences in their life worlds to one another.

The Value of Field Education

A third topic for ATS data collection in the *Graduating Student Questionnaire* is field education. Table 8 in chapter two summarized frequencies for the top two effects of required field education or internships. The two most commonly reported effects were "better idea of my strengths and weaknesses" and "improved pastoral skills." The results of this study are consistent with this funding. Participants also reported that ministry experiences sharpened their sense of vocational clarity, the third most commonly reported effect of field education in the ATS data.

This study's data appear to agree with the consistent finding (Association of Theological Schools, Table 16, 2004; Table 16, 2007b) that most M.Div. students consider field education to be a very important or important part of theological education. Moreover, this study's results also agree with Dunn, Ehrich, Mylonas, and Hansford's (2000) finding that students training to be teachers and nurses reported that field experiences increased their confidence, enriched their understandings of the role of professionals, and reinforced their understanding that their professional work made a difference in the lives of others. In ministry as in other helping professions, becoming a professional is enhanced by structured opportunities to engage in professional practice.

Previous Ethnographies and Study Results

The previous section discussed the findings of this study in relation to data routinely collected by the Association of Theological Schools. This section discusses how this study's results compare with past research about seminary students that employed ethnographic methods. This section first discusses similarities with past ethnographic research, then comments on distinctive findings.

Similarities with Past Ethnographic Findings

In some respects, the results of this study are consistent with the ethnographies of seminary life conducted by Kleinman (1984) and Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997). Specifically, this research found that community, the academic program, faculty and staff, and spirituality all produced impacts on students. Both this study and Kleinman's research at Midwest Seminary found that students used a discourse about community. At NCTS, first-career students reported that community was the dominant message of the school. At both schools, there were variations in the experience that students had of community. Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler also found that distinctive student cultures existed at Mainline Theological Seminary (MTS) and Evangelical Theological Seminary (ETS). Like students at NCTS, students at Midwest Seminary, MTS, and ETS created informal support systems based on shared theological convictions, spiritual practices, or a sense of solidarity. Student piety at ETS, for instance, was similar to the small charismatic/Pentecostal subculture at NCTS. The support group for African American students discovered by Kleinman at Midwest Seminary was echoed by Asian students at NCTS who frequently socialized together and the quasi-secret Not From Around Here group. Like commuter students at NCTS, commuter students at MTS

had more contacts with persons not associated with the seminary than students who lived on campus.

At NCTS, as at other sites of seminary ethnographies, faculty and the academic program clearly influenced the life worlds of students. Students were shaped by academic programs and the school's ethos to change. The varieties of transformation described by NCTS students (new theological knowledge, new skills for ministry, personal growth) echo the changes observed by Kleinman, Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler at their research sites. Kleinman, for instance, concluded that Midwest Seminary shaped students into a specific sort of minister, the humanistic professional.

Distinctive Finding: Influence of Church Requirements

In three respects, the results of this study differ from those obtained by earlier ethnographers. The first distinctive finding is the importance of Church Requirements. As reported in detail in chapter four, NCTS students reported that Church Requirements were highly influential. The affinity Church Requirements was a driver in student mindmaps. Kleinman (1984) found that students were "more sensitive to what their teachers and peers think and do" (p. 21) than to church expectations associated with the path to ordination. Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) discussed the influence of denominational requirements on both MTS and ETS in terms of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) but reported little student concern about fulfilling church requirements. In this study, students in both constituencies were acutely aware that the seminary experience entailed attention both to the formal academic requirements of NCTS and the distinctive requirements of their respective denominations. Students satisficed to achieve, to the best of their abilities, competing

goods. They wanted to learn at seminary, and they wanted to advance towards ordination in their respective churches.

Distinctive Finding: The Importance of Campus Facilities

A second distinctive finding in this study was the importance of a seminary's facilities in the life worlds of students. In this research, students reported that the affinity Facilities exerted influence over many other aspects of the seminary experience. Students living on campus reported that the construction of Scholars Hall disrupted their sense of community and made getting around campus inconvenient. They reported that classrooms were adequate, if not state-of-the-art. Virtually all students that Kleinman (1984) studied at Midwest Seminary lived in seminary housing. The main function of facilities, however, was to be the background for the unfolding drama of community-building that socialized students as humanistic professionals. Like the crew of a submarine, students at Midwest and NCTS ate, studied, and argued together. Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler's (1997) study described the campus of MTS as "a tight ring of buildings in an affluent residential section of a large city" (p. 203) and the sprawling suburban ETS campus as large enough to suggest "the impression of a rural retreat" (p. 3). At neither school, however, did informants give as much prominence to the campus environment as did students at NCTS. It is possible that the construction of Scholars Hall during the time that this research was undertaken heightened the importance of facilities in the minds of participants to an unusual degree. This explanation could be tested in a follow-up study at NCTS after the completion of the new student apartment building. It may also be the case that the IQA method of pair-wise comparisons between affinities brought to light relationships (for instance, explicitly

asking about the relationship between Facilities and Community) that otherwise would not be apparent. This comparative method may explain why Facilities was identified as a driver in the mindmaps of both constituencies.

Distinctive Finding: Two Dominant Messages

Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler (1997) reported a single dominant message at each seminary that they studied. They drew conclusions from the cumulative evidence of their field work. This study directly asked participants what the over-arching message of the school (if any) was. At NCTS, participants identified two central messages, each of which was a virtual quotation from part of the school's mission statement. As argued earlier in this chapter, the message of community (identified by first-career students) and the message of training for ministry (noted by second-career students) appear to fit the developmental challenges faced by members of each constituency because of their ages. Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler argued that the central message provided a "map of the dominant culture's contours and boundaries, including its places of honor and forbidden territories" (p. 211). They also noted variations on the dominant message and argued that students appropriated the central message to varying degrees. The findings of this study suggest that the age of students is a significant factor in how students hear a school's dominant message or messages. Because of the critical distance between researcher and subjects (Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2000), what may appear clear to the researchers may not be apparent to those living in a given microculture. Perhaps the outsider knows more (or knows differently) than the insider. If religious microcultures and educational organizations are as complex as research suggests (Browning, 1991; Dorsey, 1995; Guest, Tusting, & Woodhead,

2004; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Shaw, Valadez, & Rhoads, 1999), there seems to be no a priori reason why a given seminary should promote a single dominant message.

Unexpected Findings: Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy

This study of the life worlds of first- and second-career seminarians used an IQA approach in order to look with fresh eyes at the phenomenon of seminary study. As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, many findings of this research are consistent with the published literature about seminary students. NCTS students, like other seminarians, enter seminary study because of a sense of divine leading. NCTS students are profoundly shaped by the culture of their school and identify a dominant message or messages. However, two aspects of this study appear to represent departures from previous research. Participants identified as significant two affinities, Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy, that are relatively absent from the literature of theological education. The curriculum of Catholic seminaries around the world must conform to established norms of the church as established by its hierarchy (Kasny, 2001; Mize, 2005). In the United States, the bishops approved the most recent set of norms in June 2005 (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). While Protestant theological schools determine their own curricula and are often financially independent of church bodies with whom they have relationships (Holifield, 2007), participants in this research had the expectations of their respective Protestant denominations on their minds. Students at NCTS thought that church requirements influenced many aspects of their theological education. This finding points to the lively and symbiotic relationship between seminaries and the religious communities which they serve (Aleshire, 2008).

A second unexpected finding of this study was the importance of the affinity School Bureaucracy. This affinity was a driver in the mindmaps of both constituencies. Participants stated that school administrators were influential in such matters as curriculum reform, selecting faculty, and establishing and enforcing policies (e.g., housing policies). A seminary's administration exists to "provide the institutional care that schools need in order for learning, teaching, and research to thrive" (Aleshire, 2008, p. 114). When done well, administration may little trouble the lives of students. As reported in detail in chapter four, students in this study were generally positive about the school's administration. It may be the case that the IQA method of explicit pair-wise comparisons between affinities brought to light relationships that otherwise would not be apparent. This comparative method may explain why School Bureaucracy was identified as a driver in the mindmaps of both constituencies. It is also plausible that students were concerned about the school's administrative practices because they were bothered by the large construction project taking place on campus during the time when these data were collected.

This section commented on two unexpected findings of this study, suggesting that the IQA method may have surfaced previously unnoted dimensions of theological education. The next section uses this study's results to modify the model of theological education presented in chapter two.

Students in Seminary: A Revised Model

Based on the published literature about seminary students, ecological theory, and college impacts, chapter two presented a model to describe the process of theological

education with a focus on students. Table 40 reproduces the model Students in Seminary from chapter two. This section uses the results of this study to make modifications to the model. Table 41 shows the refined model. Revisions are reported in italics. The mindmaps of constituencies described the life worlds of students. These conceptual worlds are dynamic. All affinities are influencing and being influenced by other affinities during the course of a student's time at seminary. The revised model Students in Seminary takes these findings and uses them to bring new granularity to thinking about theological education, understood as a coherent set of educational experiences leading to the desired outcome of Master of Divinity education: theologically knowledgeable, skilled ministers.

The findings in this study impinge on the original model (Table 40) in three respects. First, findings provide an enhanced picture of the seminary environment. Administrators as well as their policies (School Bureaucracy) were drivers for students. This study also suggests that campus facilities and church requirements should be in the foreground as factors influencing students. The notion that a seminary has a single central or over-arching message is modified, based on findings of this study, to include the possibility that a given school promotes one or more such messages. Second, the results of this study suggest that the peer environment is comprised of serious and complex engagement in school. Such engagement includes formal and informal student groups and individual spiritual practices as well as relationships with faculty, classroom experiences, field work in ministry, and theological reflection. Students also exert themselves to fulfill church expectations such as ordination examinations. They take course work

Table 40

Students in Seminary

Pre-seminary Characteristics & Life-Course →	Seminary Environment →	Peer Environment → Individual Student Experiences	Characteristics of Graduates
Sociodemographic traits	Structures & policies	Following rules	
Academic preparation	Faculty culture		
Theological commitments ● church influences ● sense of call	Dominant message	Responding to dominant message ● exposure ● experimentation ● resistance	Personal appropriation of dominant message
Personal experiences (in microsystems) Social experiences Job experience	Intended & enacted curriculum ● faculty as teachers & mentors ● field work ● spiritual formation ● worship	Experienced curriculum ● reading & reflection ● ministry experiences ● classroom experiences ● relationships with other students ● relationships with faculty	Socialization as a minister ● theological knowledge ● ministerial skills ● pastoral attitudes ● Christian practices
		Family & work	Family relationships

Derived principally from Bronfenbrenner (1979), Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, & Marler (1997), and Terenzini and Reason (2005).

Table 41 *Students in Seminary as Revised*

Pre-seminary Characteristics & Life-Course →	Seminary Environment →	Peer Environment → Individual Student Experiences	Characteristics of Graduates
Sociodemographic traits	*Administrators & policies*	Following rules	
Academic preparation	Faculty culture		
	Campus facilities		
	Church requirements	*Ordination examinations* *Courses and ministry experiences mandated by oversight committees*	*Fulfillment of church requirements*
Theological commitments ● church influences ● sense of call to ministry	*Dominant message or messages*	Responding to *dominant messages* ● exposure ● *filtering/selectivity* ● experimentation ● resistance	Personal appropriation or *rejection of dominant messages* *Isolates leave unaffected*
Personal experiences (in microsystems) Social experiences Job experience	Intended & enacted curriculum ● faculty as teachers & mentors ● field work ● spiritual formation ● worship	*Engagement in school* ● reading & reflection ● ministry experiences ● classroom experiences ● relationships with other students ● *formal and informal student groups* ● relationships with faculty ● *spiritual practices* *Reshaping of call to ministry*	Socialization as a minister *(Transformation)* ● theological knowledge ● ministerial skills ● pastoral attitudes ● Christian practices
		Family & work	Family relationships

Derived principally from Bronfenbrenner (1979), Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, & Marler (1997), and Terenzini and Reason (2005).

or Clinical Pastoral Education because their denominational oversight committees require them to do so. Students actively filter the dominant message or messages of their school based on their individual life experience and preferences. Taken together, the seminary environment and peer environment reshape student perceptions of their calls to ministry. Finally, this study suggests that the characteristics of graduates include compliance with church expectations leading to ordination. Student appropriation of a school's dominant message or messages may include flat-out rejection of it. Students that are on the margins of the school's communications networks (isolates) may not seriously hear or engage the school's over-arching message or messages. Socialization as a minister is transformative.

Study Limitations and Credibility

This study focused on the microculture of a single site, New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS), and sought, using interactive qualitative analysis (IQA), to approach the phenomenon of the student seminary experience with few preconceptions. The number of participants that took part in initial focus groups, full interviews, and shorter interviews to provide theoretical codes, met the standards for robustness set by Northcutt and McCoy (2004). During the academic year in which this study was conducted, 123 students were enrolled in the M.Div. program at NCTS. Of that total, 88 were eligible to participate in the study. Students were eligible to take part in the study if they had completed at least 30 credit hours at NCTS and had attended at least one semester of enrollment at 9 or more credit hours. The researcher obtained theoretical codes from 37 students, 42 percent of the eligible population. The mean age for those in the study (38.2) was approximately two years higher than the mean age of the school's M.Div. student

population as a whole (36.3). Table 42 reports selected characteristics of the seminary's M.Div. student population and study participants.

Table 42

Selected Characteristics of NCTS M.Div. Student Population and Study Participants

	Gender (percent)	Denomination (percent)	Race (percent)
General Population	53 female 47 male	57 PCUSA 20 UMC 23 other churches	81 White non-Hispanic 19 other groups
Study Participants	51 female 49 male	59 PCUSA 16 UMC 25 other churches	89 White non-Hispanic 11 other groups

Based on NCTS registrar data, fall 2008.

The sample for this study was sufficiently large to make the study credible, based on the canons of IQA. The mindmaps created using IQA protocols are a kind of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that, in the first instance, is pertinent to a single research site. The question of whether or not the affinities identified in this study helpfully map the life worlds of students at other seminaries is an open question for future research. The researcher makes no claim to generalizability.

This research had several limitations beyond its focus on a single seminary. Because it used IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) as its method, the researcher assumed that informants were competent to speak about their lived experience and did so truthfully. Most of the discourse reported in this study came from 17 informants. Each informant was interviewed once, for approximately 90 minutes. Thus, there was little opportunity to build rapport between the informant and the researcher (Mertens, 2005) or to ask follow up questions. The researcher asked whether or not participants identified an

over-arching message to their theological education (research question 4) as the final question in each interview. It is possible that students would have produced longer responses to this question if it had been asked earlier in the interviews. As reported in chapters four and five, the researcher made judgments about the sub-themes of student discourse, the dominant timbre of affinities, and motifs of the seminary experience at the research site. Such judgments therefore reflect the positionality and limitations of the researcher. IQA privileges study participants as competent to describe their life worlds. This study made no effort to explore what Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 2005) called exosystems and macrosystems that influenced participants and the researcher. In other words, this research limited itself to report and interpret how students at one free-standing Protestant seminary understood their experience and did not explore how social and economic factors or cultural scripts shaped student experience. From the perspective of ecological theory, there is every reason to assert that such broad societal factors shaped the students who took part in this study.

Recommendations for Practice

Cohen and March (1974) argued that one of the challenges of higher education was unclear technology. Schools often do not understand the relationship between the processes that they use and the results obtained. This study explored how first- and second-career seminarians think about their lives as students. This section suggests how the results of this study might inform the work of theological educators so that the technology of seminaries more effectively produces persons equipped to take positions of leadership in churches, the stated purpose of M.Div. education (Association of

Theological Schools, 1996). The suggestions in this section are necessarily tentative because this study explored the conceptual worlds of students at a single seminary following IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) procedures. The previous section discussed the limitations of this research in more detail. Moreover, the suggestions in this section reflect the researcher's interpretation of the data. Other readers may well discern other meanings in the data or disagree with the researcher's conclusions.

Based on the findings of this study, theological educators would do well to attend to six things. They should take the ages of their students seriously. They should note that students face the twin demands of church requirements and academic expectations. They should promote small groups and support student families. They should provide decent student housing. They should provide students multiple opportunities for ministry. Finally, they should understand that theological education is a complex system encompassing far more than the formal curriculum.

Life Worlds and the Life-Span

First, the findings of this study suggest that theological educators take the varying ages of students seriously. While in many respects the conceptual worlds of seminary students appear to be similar regardless of the age of the student, there are age-graded normative experiences that are distinctive to different parts of the life-span. In this study, one such age-graded difference discovered was the expectations of first-career students regarding information technology. First-career students thought that the school did not use information technology as robustly as they were used to. To cite a second example, one second-career participant dropped out of seminary for a time because of academic problems and the deployment of his son to fight in Afghanistan. As Arnett (2000, 2004)

discovered, students currently in their 20s understand the world in distinctive ways. Many theological schools teach students in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and even their 60s. A single classroom may have such a mix of students. Faculty and student services professionals will benefit from in-service training about common trajectories of adult life and the preferences of digital natives and digital immigrants. To meet the needs of digital natives, some faculty may need to learn new skills to use current information technology in the classroom. Following the lead of Ricciuti (2003), seminary faculty should continue to reflect on how the wide age range of students ought to influence course design and classroom practices.

Both Church Requirements and the Academic Program Matter

In this study, both first- and second-career students were aware of the twin demands of church requirements and the academic program. For participants in both constituencies, the affinities School Bureaucracy and Church Requirements were drivers, exerting influence on other parts of their life worlds. Students sometimes had to choose between meeting the demands of the seminary or meeting the demands of their denomination. Based on this study's findings, theological educators would serve students well by working with church bodies to minimize conflicts caused by the perceived mismatch between what seminaries teach and the expectations of church bodies. Indeed, because seminaries are hybrid institutions (Aleshire, 2008) existing to train leaders for churches and educate with academic integrity, seminaries have a vested interest aligning their curricula with the legitimate ecclesial expectation that seminary-trained pastors be competent. The findings of this study suggest that too large of a gap between what the church expects and what the seminary teaches frustrates students, who constantly make

choices about how best to meet their dual obligations as apprentices and students. Seminary leaders, therefore, need to explain to denominational leaders why a given school's curriculum is constructed as it is. Denominational leaders need to communicate with seminary leaders so that theological educators do not lose sight of what church bodies expect of new M.Div. graduates.

Support for Student Groups and Families

Theological education, according to study participants, is a difficult, transformative experience best accomplished in the company of peers. Both formal and informal groups bind students to each other and the process of seminary education. Through relationships between students, they offer one another emotional support and make sense of the new information and new experiences that they undergo during seminary. Thus, a third implication of the findings of this study is that seminaries should encourage students to form groups of all sorts. According to students at NCTS, the most helpful groups may be informal groups created by students themselves. At NCTS, funds were set aside to provide some financial support for groups designed by students themselves to explore a common interest. Other seminaries might emulate this model, which signals institutional support but does not dictate specific details of how groups should function.

Seminaries should also support the families of students, because the time demands of seminary study shrink time available for family activities. The seminary's calendar controls family schedules, according to participants in this study. It seems desirable that seminaries, to the extent possible, should synchronize their academic calendars to the public school calendar of the district in which the seminary is situated. Such

harmonization can limit difficulties with child care caused by a mismatch between seminary vacations and the vacation schedule of children in school. At NCTS, the seminary provided a support group designed for married students and their spouses. The group, led by an outside facilitator, provided a safe place to discuss issues related to the simultaneous pursuit of seminary and marriage. Other seminaries might make such support groups available to their married students.

Education in Residence: Delivering on Expectations

An unexpected finding of this study was the importance of the physical resources of a school. The affinity Facilities was a driver in the mindmaps of both first- and second-career students. NCTS promoted community as a core value and encouraged students to live in seminary housing. When students perceived that the housing policy was unfair, or that academic buildings on campus were maintained better than student housing, they raised questions about the school's willingness to deliver on its implied promise of decent facilities for students. The findings of this study suggest that theological schools that value residential education need to have the financial resources to provide student housing and community areas—not simply classrooms—that minimize student frustration with logistics and free them to engage their studies. The campus environment impacts student life.

Ministry Opportunities Shape Ministers

Participants in this study were eager to acquire new skills as ministers. They valued ministry opportunities that gave them hands-on experiences, clarified their perception of call, and prepared them to serve others. They valued theological ideas especially as these ideas (e.g., theodicy) resonated with their first-hand experiences as

apprentice pastors. The curriculum at the research site provided a required Ministry Practicum. Many students also took a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, often because their church bodies required it. The results of this study suggest that theological educators would do well to provide multiple ministry opportunities for students because ministry opportunities shape ministers. In the NCTS curriculum, students often took the required Ministry Practicum during their final year of study and may not have had many ministry opportunities before taking that course. Given the importance that students place on required field work and other experiential learning opportunities, theological educators might consider requiring hands-on courses relatively early in a student's academic program.

Theological Education as a Complex System

Finally, the results of this study suggest that students experience seminary as a complex system. The system is linked to their previous life experiences and commitments. A school's faculty, church requirements, and academic programs lead ultimately to transformation. A seminary promotes a dominant message or messages that students filter, appropriate, or reject. The results of this study point to the existence of patterns of influence that are at work in theological education regardless of the age of students. Students actively make sense of lived experience and share a distinctive microculture. As a conceptual world in Goodman's (1978) sense, students experience seminary life dynamically and iteratively. To play on the etymology of seminary (from the Greek for seed), students in seminary engage in a process of growth. Difficulties in any part of the system (unsatisfactory relationships with other students, frustrations with

facilities, baffling church procedures) produce negative effects in other parts of the system. Positive experiences promote new learning and socialization for ministry.

If the IQA approach (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) to mapping the conceptual worlds of students gets at real relationships in the life worlds of students, then this study suggests that theological educators would do well to understand the work of a seminary in holistic terms. A seminary is more than a faculty and a formal curriculum. Neither school leaders nor students control many aspects of the seminary experience. Theological educators might consider surveying students periodically about their experience with the 12 affinities discovered in this study. Such a survey (which, in IQA terms, would be concerned with timbre) could help educators to see what the school was doing well and areas which appeared to cause students problems.

Future Research

This study used a phenomenological approach to study the life worlds of first- and second-career seminary students. The results point to five fruitful areas for further research. First, this study discovered that the ordination requirements of Protestant churches played a significant role in the conceptual worlds of seminarians. Further research might explore the extent to which the faculty and administration of theological schools take such church expectations into account when devising curricula and teaching. Research might examine how schools communicate with church bodies about perceived misalignments between denominational tests and academic programs. Second, participants in this study affirmed the important role played by school administrators and bureaucratic procedures in the life worlds of students. Further research could explore

whether this finding is idiosyncratic to students in this research site or a general student concern in theological schools. A surprising finding of this study was the importance that facilities had in the minds of students. Students at NCTS lived through the construction of a new building while this research was conducted. A third area for research is to conduct a follow-up study at NCTS about the importance of facilities. Such research might reveal whether students placed such importance on facilities because of the short-term disruptions caused by construction or whether facilities continued to be a driver. In IQA terms, if facilities influenced fewer affinities in the system, the affinity Facilities would "move" from the driver to the mid-system or outcome zone of the mindmap. A fourth area of research concerns the generalizability of the affinities discovered at this research site. Focus group research at other mainline seminaries using the same issue statement could suggest if the 12 affinities articulated by students at this research site are common to the life worlds of students at other theological schools. If so, IQA could offer a new tool for increasing the understanding of student experience.

The final research question of this study explored the over-arching messages that students reported were promoted by their school. The findings of this study differed with Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler's (1997) conclusion that theological schools promote a single central message, albeit with variations. Further research might explore how NCTS was able to transmit its mission statement to students as effectively as it did. Further research might be conducted at other theological schools to test the range of messages that various constituencies perceive.

Chapter Five: Summary

This section summarizes the chapter. This chapter analyzed key motifs of student experience, compared the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students, and interpreted the finding that the research site promoted two over-arching messages. The chapter then put results into conversation with previous research, made suggestions for practice, and offered suggestions for further research about seminary students.

Key Motifs

Participants spoke about 12 affinities, or themes, of their student experience. These 12 affinities contained discourse about 68 sub-themes. Upon analysis, key motifs of the student experience were the importance of the school's facilities, NCTS as an intimate community, and the variation of experiences that students had of relationships with other students. Students became satisficers, choosing satisfactory solutions to the competing demands of school, church, and family. Students reported that their theological education required vigorous engagement and self-discipline. Students affirmed that God was active in their life worlds.

Conceptual Worlds Compared

Analysis of the findings of this study suggests that the conceptual worlds of first- and second-career students are similar, both in the shape of group mindmaps and in the dominant timbre for affinities. For typical members of both constituencies, Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy influence other affinities. The outcome is change. Students acquire new theological knowledge, pastoral skills, and a refined sense of vocation. Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005) provides an explanation for two distinctive sub-themes of student experience that differed by constituency. First-

career students commented on the school's information technology, consistent with their life experience as digital natives. Second-career students reported cases of extreme emotion during seminary, which were normative events for individuals in their 30s and later.

One School, Two Over-Arching Messages

Chapter five also interpreted the finding that first-career students concluded that the seminary's central message was about community, while second-career students concluded that the central message was about training for ministry. Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005) suggests that students received the over-arching messages that they did because of how they were shaped by involvement in various micro-systems before and during seminary. Both of the dominant messages received by students functioned as an implied promise or psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989, 1995) between the seminary and its students.

New Light on Previous Research

Study results provide new insight into data routinely collected by ATS. For instance, call to ministry appears to remain fluid throughout a student's time in seminary and is reshaped by the seminary experience. Unlike previous studies of theological students, this study found that church requirements and a school's facilities played significant roles in student experience. This study found that NCTS promoted multiple messages, not a single dominant message discovered in earlier ethnographic research at two sites (Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, & Marler, 1997).

Suggestions for Practice

The results of this study suggest that first- and second-career students experience theological education as a complex, iterative system. Theological educators can enhance student experience by recognizing the demands that denominational requirements make on seminarians, supporting the formation of formal and informal student groups, and ensuring that campus housing and other resources do not frustrate student engagement.

Areas for Further Research

The results point to four fruitful areas for further research. First, researchers might explore the extent to which the faculty and administration of theological schools take church expectations into account when devising curricula and teaching. Second, researchers could explore whether this study's findings about the importance of school bureaucracy and facilities were idiosyncratic to this research site, or a general student concern in theological education.

A third area of research concerns the general usefulness of the affinities discovered at this research site. IQA research at other mainline seminaries could suggest if the 12 affinities articulated by students at this research site are common to the life worlds of students at other theological schools. Finally, further research might explore how NCTS was able to transmit its mission statement to students as effectively as it did. Further research might be conducted at other theological schools to test the range of messages that various constituencies perceive.

Appendix A: Focus Group Procedures

Employing IQA procedures (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the researcher led focus groups to generate the key themes of the seminary experience at NCTS. This appendix describes how the researcher decided on the issue statement to guide the focus groups and how he conducted the groups.

Inviting Participation

After receiving permission to interview students at NCTS, the researcher issued invitations to students asking them to participate in a focus group about the seminary experience. In October 2008, the researcher led a focus group of eight first-career seminarians, and a second focus group of nine second-career seminarians. Members of the focus groups met the conditions of eligibility described in chapter three.

IQA offers a clear rationale for defining constituencies and conducting separate focus groups for each constituency of interest. Members of constituencies are similar to one another on the basis of one or more characteristics of interest to the researcher. Members of the focus group generate the themes of their life world. At the initial stages of an IQA study, it is important not to lose the particularity of lived experience by prematurely aggregating the data, especially in a study that seeks to compare one constituency with another. Thus, in this research there was a focus group consisting entirely of persons meeting the criteria for first-career students, and another focus group consisting entirely of persons meeting the criteria for second-career students.

Issue Statement

In IQA, the researcher creates an *issue statement* worded in a precise way and appropriate to the phenomenon of interest to the researcher. By presenting an issue statement at the start of a focus group, the researcher signals the topic to be considered but does not suggest which specific elements of the topic are of special interest to the researcher. The issue statement also is apparently bland. Its wording should not suggest that some ideas or responses to the issue statement are truer, more desirable, wittier, or more valuable than others. Issue statements take the form of a prompt phrased as, "Tell me about [the phenomenon of interest]." Thus, issue statements cast a very wide net in order to capture the breadth of lived experience of the members of the focus group. In practice, a researcher will know if an issue statement is adequate because members of the constituency will be able to talk about the phenomenon mentioned in the issue statement with facility. The issue statement for this study was, "Tell me about being a student at New Creation Theological Seminary."

The issue statement for this study met the requirements specified by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) for an adequate issue statement. First, the issue statement signaled the topic to be discussed. Second, the statement did not hint at any specific elements or sub-themes of the topic. The issue statement was quite featureless. It did not suggest that some ideas or responses to the issue statement are preferable to other possible responses. Finally, the issue statement was phrased in an open-ended manner, "Tell me about [the phenomenon of interest]."

Focus Group Warm-Up

The researcher used the same process to conduct both focus groups, one for the first-career constituents and one for the second-career constituents. The researcher explained the purpose of the focus group, identified the minimal possible hazards of participation, and reiterated to those present that participation was completely voluntary. The researcher verified the eligibility of all of the participants for membership in the appropriate constituency. Participants expressed their consent to take part in the group by signing consent forms. The researcher then directed participants through a warm-up exercise using guided imagery about New Creation Theological Seminary. The researcher invited participants to take a mental walking tour across the NCTS campus looking back over experiences common to students who have completed at least a year of full-time engagement (30 credit hours) at NCTS.

Silent Brainstorming

The warm-up exercise led directly into the second phase of the focus group, a silent brainstorming process. Each participant received 25 five-by-eight-inch index cards and a marker. The researcher invited participants to "tell me about being a student at New Creation Theological Seminary." Participants were encouraged to write one short phrase or idea on each card and to write on as many cards as they wished. As a brainstorming procedure, asking each participant to produce her own ideas silently has two positive effects. First, a silent process enables all participants to share their opinions, not simply those who choose to speak out loud. Second, the silent approach minimizes the opportunity for a focus group leader to express her individual bias. McCoy and Northcutt

(2004) note that throughout the focus group process, the competent researcher "intervenes only in the process, not content, and has no vested interest in the outcome" (p. 93). As a result of silent brainstorming, participants produced dozens of data points describing various aspects of their experience as students at NCTS. First-career participants wrote 141 cards; second-career participants wrote 125 cards.

Clarifying Meaning

In the third phase of the focus group, participants clarified the meaning of the text written on response cards. Participants used painter's tape to affix their responses to the blank wall of the room in which the session was conducted. After all cards were taped on the wall, the researcher asked half of the participants to organize the cards into categories by putting together cards that seem similar to them. The researcher asked participants to arrange the cards as much as possible without conferring with others. The rest of the group watched as the initial categories were created. The researcher then asked the first group to step back and allow the other participants to continue moving cards into categories. He made it clear that it was permissible to move cards already placed in one category into another, if an individual thought that a new location made more sense.

Once cards were placed into groups to the satisfaction of the participants, the researcher led a discussion about the meaning of the cards and the categories produced by the constituents. The researcher read every card aloud and invited the author of the card and others to comment on it. The purpose of this discussion was to arrive at a consensual understanding of the meaning of the text written on the cards. After a discussion of each card individually, the researcher then led the group to reach an agreement on names for

the categories into which the group members had clustered the cards. The researcher began with the tentative category that appeared to him to be the most homogeneous and therefore most straightforward to name. The researcher did not suggest names himself, he simply asked, "What do you call the cards in this column?" or "What's a good name for this group of cards?" When the group achieved a consensus about the name of a category, the researcher created a new card as the heading of that category. The researcher then asked the group to create a brief definition for the emergent category.

After a category had been named and given a working definition, the researcher moved on to the next cluster of cards and repeated the clarification process. During discussion, some cards were re-assigned to other categories because of the emerging consensus about the scope and meaning of a given category. At the end of the focus group, the researcher reviewed the names and definitions of the categories identified by the group and invited further comment. The researcher thanked participants, and the focus groups ended.

Procedural Consistency

The same procedure was used for each focus group, one comprised of first-career students and one comprised of second-career students. The researcher digitally recorded both focus groups and collected all data cards produced during the sessions. Armed with the categories discovered in the focus group process, the researcher carried out the next phase of the IQA process, the refinement of emerging themes into affinities and the production of an interview protocol for individual interviews. Appendix B describes these procedures.

Appendix B: Refinement of Affinities

Appendix B describes how the researcher, following IQA protocols (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) refined the rough categories identified by focus group participants into usable affinities in the IQA sense. The appendix first describes the refinement for the first-career constituency, then for the second-career constituency.

Refinement of Affinities: First-Career Constituency

Eight participants took part in the focus group of first-career students. The silent brainstorming process produced 141 individual cards containing a word or phrase. The group clarified the meaning of the text written on response cards by clumping cards into groups. The researcher led a 37-minute discussion during which the group arrived at a consensual understanding of the text written on the cards and gave each category a tentative name. The group created 11 categories. The researcher collected all cards and dismissed the participants with thanks.

The researcher transcribed the text from all of the cards. The group produced 11 rough categories: Community, Faculty and Staff, Discerning Your Calling, Physical Plant Facilities, Academics, Academic Practices, Challenges, Spirituality, Ecclesial Requirements, Ministry, and Positive Emotions. Using the rules for robust affinities, the researcher recast the rough categories into 10 affinities. After reviewing the transcript of the discussion, the researcher wrote definitions for each affinity.

Community

The group generated 32 cards under the heading of *community*. Community (Table B1) refers to ways in which students are sustained in *relationships* with other

students. Community is expressed in *activities* such as Student Forum (a weekly meeting organized by the student government), the student senate, communion in chapel, going to The Old Vic (a nearby bar), and playing flag football. Community is supported by *formal* structures such as worship in chapel and new student orientation, and by *informal* friendships, drinking coffee, and fun.

Table B1

Affinity: Community (32 cards)

Awesome community	Friends	Student forum
Coffee	Friends	Relationships
Comforting classmates	Friendship	Student senate
Communion in chapel	Friendships	Senate
Community	Friendships	Open minds and hearts
Community	Fun	Orientation
Community	Helpful students	New student orientation
Compassionate colleagues	Lasting friendships	The Old Vic
Currie backyard community	Laughing	Receptions--Stuart Atrium
Extracurricular activities	Marriage	Standing in, on & with
Flag-football	Listening to others	

Faculty and Staff

The group generated four cards under the heading of faculty and staff (Table B2). Faculty and staff are employees of NCTS. They assist students during their seminary experience through helpful advice, mentoring, or friendliness. Thus, the affinity is about faculty and staff impact on students. By the standards for affinities, the name for this affinity is appropriate.

Table B2

Focus Group Category: Faculty and Staff (4 cards)

Jovial staff/fac[ulty]	Helpful advisor
Friendly staff	Mentors

Discerning Your Calling/Call to Ministry

Participants produced 21 cards for the category *discerning your calling*. Discerning your calling (Table B3) refers to one's perception of how God is leading a person to a particular form of ministry and how someone tests out that perception. A call is discerned by prayer and reflection. Individuals may conclude that God has indeed called them. Discerning Your Calling leads to increased self-understanding. IQA favors affinity names without verbs, which may imply relationships or signal desirable answers. The researcher renamed this affinity Call to Ministry.

Table B3

Focus Group Category: Discerning Your Calling (21 cards)

Anticipation	Holy Spirit
Call	Is that really God's voice?
Called	Praying
Calling	Pushing our beliefs
Deepening commitment to call	Reflecting
Development	Sharpening
Discernment	Transition
Discernment	Understanding self
Exciting	Unexpected
Exciting call stories	Vocation
Gifts	

Physical Plant/Facilities

Participants produced six cards for the category *physical plant/facilities* (Table B4). Physical plant facilities are spaces provided by NCTS and used by students for living, classes, and study, including spaces under construction, such as the student apartment house. A less cumbersome term for this affinity is simply Facilities.

Table B4

Focus Group Category: Physical Plant/Facilities (6 cards)

construction	Housing	Luther Hall desk
Great facilities	Lack of outlets (electric)	Dining hall

Academic Program

Participants wrote 10 cards for the category *academics* (Table B5). Academics describes the curriculum presented to students through lectures and readings. The curriculum contains information about theology, instruction on the interpretation of the Bible (exegesis), and other kinds of useful knowledge. Participants included campus lecture series and seminars that are often available to students but are not formally part of the M.Div. curriculum. The researcher named this affinity *Academic Program*, in order to make clear the relationship between the concepts expressed here and those expressed in a related category that participants called academic practices (below).

Table B5

Focus Group Category: Academics (10 cards)

Academic robes & maces	Lectures (Barth, Midwinter's, President's, etc.)
Calvin (and Barth, Wesley, etc.)	Love for biblical languages
Engagement with and in the Word (Bible)	Reading
Exegesis	Theology
Exegesis	Well-rounded knowledge

Engaging the Academic Program

Focus group members wrote 14 cards for the category *academic practices* (Table B6). This affinity focuses on ways that students engaged the curriculum (studying, thinking, writing papers) that lead to learning, knowledge, and seeing the Bible (Word) in new ways.

Table B6

Focus Group Category: Academic Practices (14 cards)

"I don't know" is okay	Knowledge	Seeing WORD anew
Discussing	Learning	Studying
Grounding	Learning --- new & old	Tests
Hard work	Papers	Thinking
Working hard	Prepared	

Challenges; Engaging the Academic Program

Participants wrote 26 cards for a category that they called *challenges* (Table B7) Challenges revolve around the struggle to keep up with reading, master biblical languages, deal with expectations from the faculty, and be stretched by "daunting" material. The researcher concluded that 11 of the cards referred to emotions (fear, worrying, etc.). Removing these cards yielded a revised set of texts (Table B8).

Table B7

Focus Group Category: Challenges (26 cards)

Anxiety [emotion]	I don't like biblical languages
Challenges	Overwhelmed [emotion]
Challenging	Overwhelmed at times [emotion]
Challenging	Overwhelming [emotion]
Daunting readings	Questions
Exhausting	Strenuous pace
Fatigue	Stress [emotion]
Fear [emotion]	Struggle with Professor A
Frustrating [emotion]	Struggle with Professor B
Some frustrations [emotion]	Taxing paper writing
Isolation [emotion]	Ups and downs [emotion]
Learning from mistakes	What?!
Not "somehow" but "triumphantly"	Worrying about finances [emotion]

The revised affinity refers to the *effort* required to write papers, master biblical languages, and engage certain professors and daunting readings. The revised affinity is very close to the category Academic Practices, which includes cards such as "working

hard" and "studying." By combining some elements from the category Challenges with the category Academic Practices, a more robust name for the affinity emerges: Engaging the Academic Program. For focus group participants, engaging the academic program is characterized by struggle and challenge.

The affinity Academic Program and Engaging the Academic Program appeared, to the under-30 group, to have a symbiotic relationship. One participant said academic practices refers to "what we do," while academics is what the seminary provides. In IQA terms, these putative

Table B8

Possible Affinity: Engaging the Academic Program (14 cards)

Challenges	I don't like biblical languages
Challenging	Questions
Challenging	Strenuous pace
Daunting readings	Struggle with Professor A
Exhausting	Struggle with Professor B
Fatigue	Taxing paper writing
Learning from mistakes	What?!
Not "somehow" but "triumphantly"	

affinities represent points along the same conceptual continuum or suggest a possible relationship between themes (students logically must engage the academic program). Therefore, the researcher used the single affinity Academic Program.

Spirituality

Participants wrote six cards that they classified as *spirituality* (Table B9). Spirituality refers to the student's quest to sense the presence of God. For some, this is intensely personal, for others it takes place in group practices such as worship and celebrating the sacraments.

Table B9

Affinity: Spirituality (6 cards)

Chapel (i.e., worship in the chapel)	Remember your baptism
Intimacy with God	Sacraments
Personal growth & spiritual growth	Searching for the spiritual

Church Requirements

Participants wrote three cards for a category that they named *Ecclesial Requirements*. These cards (Table B10) refer to processes by which church bodies determine a candidate's fitness for ministry and certify that he or she is eligible to be called or appointed as minister. (NCTS' catalog makes clear that it is the student's responsibility to fulfill the expectations of church bodies required for ordination as a minister.) To minimize jargon, the researcher renamed this affinity Church Requirements.

Table B10

Affinity: Church Requirements (3 cards)

Jumping through hoops (PCUSA)
Requirements [denominational]
Ordination exams

Ministry

Participants wrote six cards for a category called *ministry* (Table B11). Ministry describes pastoral work in settings such as congregations and hospitals. CPE refers to Clinical Pastoral Education. Ministry Practicum is the seminary's formal program of field education in congregations.

Table B11

Affinity: Ministry

Awesome chance for ministry practice	Ministry
First and last, but good CPE experience	Speaking in ministry setting
Listening in ministry setting	Ministry Practicum

Positive Emotions to Emotions

For participants, positive emotions (Table B12) referred feelings like joy, love, and affirmation. A sub-theme had to do with positive change as a result of the seminary experience (e.g., growth). Several cards from the rough affinity *Challenges* were examples of negative emotions (fear, overwhelmed, ups and downs). Employing the standards for creating affinities, the researcher combined two categories into a single affinity, *Emotions*. Table B13 adds "negative" emotions from the rough affinity Challenges and removes cards about engagement and community, resulting in a single affinity, Emotions. The words marked by an asterisk in Table B13 do not appear to be emotions, but forms of engagement or changes resulting from the seminary experience.

Table B12

Focus Group Category: Positive Emotions (19 cards)

Affirming [better under community?]	Joy of scholarships
Appreciating	Joyful
Caring	Laughter
Diving in [seems to be engagement]	Loving
Excited	Real, authentic [better under community?]
Exciting	Risk
Fulfilling	Transformative[1]
Growing	Thirst [a form of engagement?]
Growth	Useful [i.e., I am learning useful things]
Healing	

[1] Participant said "I'm not the same person that I was a year ago."

Table B13

Affinity: Emotions

Positive	Not Positive
Appreciating	Fear
Caring	Frustrating
Excited	Some frustrations
Exciting	Isolation
Fulfilling	Overwhelmed
Healing	Overwhelmed at times
Joy of scholarships	Overwhelming
Joyful	Stress
Laughter	Ups and downs
Loving	Worrying about finances
Growing*	
Growth*	
Transformative*	
Risk*	

First-Career Focus Group: Summary

By employing the standards for constructing and naming robust affinities, the 11 rough categories named by the under-30 focus group were refined into nine affinities. Recognizing the full timbre range of emotions led to the naming of an emerging affinity, Emotions.

Table B14

Categories and Affinities, First-Career Focus Group

Category	Affinity
Community	Community
Discerning Your Calling	Call to Ministry
Faculty and Staff	Faculty and Staff
Physical Plant Facilities	Facilities
Academics	Academic Program
Academic Practices	
Challenges	
Spirituality	Spirituality
Ecclesial Requirements	Church Requirements
Ministry	Ministry
Positive Emotions	Emotions

Analysis of the relationship between the categories Academics, Academic Practices, and Challenges led the researcher to recast the names for these affinities as Academic Program. Table B14 summarizes the categories identified and named by focus group participants and the resulting affinities.

Refinement of Affinities: Second-Career Constituency

Nine participants took part in a focus group of second-career students. The silent brainstorming process produced 125 individual cards. The group clarified the meaning of the text written on response cards by clumping cards into groups. The researcher led a 55-minute discussion during which the group arrived at a consensus as to the understanding of the texts, and gave each category a tentative name. The group created 12 categories. The group placed all but three cards into categories. The researcher collected all cards and dismissed the participants with thanks.

This section describes how the researcher employed IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) norms for constructing and naming affinities to refine the rough categories into affinities. The 12 categories tentatively named by the focus group were Time Limits, Torn Between Two Worlds, Support, Expanding Intellectual Horizons, Effort, Physical, Feelings, Community, Formation, Spiritual, Journey, and Anti-Community. The resulting affinities were Community, Effort, Between Worlds, Feelings, Spiritual, and Transformation.

Community and Anti-Community

Table B15 reports the 10 cards that the group clumped into the category Community. Table B16 reports the five cards in the category Anti-Community. The

meaning of Community revolved around relationships, especially friendships, between students. One participant noted that community has a range of meanings. Under the Anti-Community heading, another participant noted that the patina of student community has divisions of church affiliation, race, age, gender, and class. Following IQA conventions, a single affinity, *Community* covers these variations in timbre. In discussion, a participant clarified that students who "check the box" do not exert themselves and resist being challenged or changed by the seminary experience. This card may fall more logically under the affinity Effort (below).

Table B15

Focus Category: Community

Community	Cared for
Friendship support	Communal
New friends	"Community" means something different
Circle of friends	Sad that this will end for me
Friendships	New friends

Table B16

Focus Group Category: Anti-Community

Divisions—race, age, class, denomination, sex
Work not returned [by instructor]
Desire to change challenged by students "checking the box"
Student/faculty classism
Controversial

Effort, Time Limits, and Physical

Participants wrote eight cards for the category Effort (Table B17), four cards for a category that they called Time Limits (Table B18), and three cards for a category named Physical (Table B19). During group discussion, the meaning of pale skin was clarified by a lament that "my skin is pale" because the participant lacks leisure time to spend

outdoors. Weight gain was also understood as the result of engaging in the demanding process of

Table B17

Focus Group Category: Effort

Exhausting	Challenge
Too much to absorb	Challenging
Challenging	Demanding
Holistic body-mind-soul effort	exhaustion

Table B18

Focus Group Category: Time Limits

Schedule
No time
Hurried along --- no rest, peace, Sabbath
Busy

Table B19

Focus Group Category: Physical

Pale skin
Weight gain
Caffeinated

attending seminary, which one participant said "takes its toll" on the human body. Taken together, these three rough categories logically combine into a single affinity, Effort. Effort refers to the level of engagement required of those who are seminary students. These respondents described their effort as time-consuming and exhausting.

Torn Between Two Worlds to Life Management

Participants wrote 10 cards for a category that they named Torn Between Two Worlds (Table B20). In discussion, one participant clarified that "drive, drive, drive" referred to the three hours of driving that he must do each day that he comes to campus. Another participant explained that "separate lives in separate cities" refers to the fact that

he lives on campus at NCTS during the week and travels home to his family only on weekends. This focus group category refers to a tension experienced by students between the world of their seminary engagement and another world of family, friends, allegiances, and work outside of seminary. Participants wrote three cards for a category that they called Support (Table B21). The types of support mentioned (parents, family, and church) point to support that students receive from outside of the seminary community. The participants use of "between" when talking about this category suggests some pattern of influence, which is an undesirable trait in IQA terms. Combining the cards from each of these rough categories, the researcher produced a single affinity, *Life Management*.

Table B20

Focus Group Category: Torn Between Two Worlds

Old friends	Time away from family
No man's land between staff and congregation at home church	Living as an observer of life
Stress of balancing act & financial burden	Separate lives in separate cities
Time away from friends	Drive, drive, drive
Balancing family & friends outside seminary with school	Disparate allegiances

Table B21

Focus Group Category: Support

Parents help
Family support
Church support

Life management refers to the student's life outside of seminary. This affinity may contain a wide range of timbre. On the one hand, students may receive support from various persons not associated with NCTS. On the other hand, students may feel challenged or stressed by the expectations that the non-seminary world places on their lives as students.

Feelings

Participants wrote 23 cards for a category called Feelings (Table B22). This category encompasses both positive emotions (e.g., joy) and negative emotions such as "frightened" and "fear of failure." The affinity Feelings adequately captures the full timbre of this category. In discussion, the author of the card "listening heart" explained that many persons at NCTS were eager to listen. This card and "seminary friends nurturing & being nurtured" may better fall under the affinity Community.

Table B22

Affinity: *Feelings*

Angry	Filled w/ joy	Listening heart
Both tiring & energizing	Frightened	Loneliness
Confusing	Frustrating	Lonely
Depressing	Frustrating	Loved
Every day exciting	Frustration	Loving
Exciting	Fun	Seminary friends nurturing & being nurtured
Exciting	Joy	Stress
Fear of failure	Joyful	

Spiritual

Focus group participants wrote 11 cards about things Spiritual (Table B23). In discussion, a participant clarified that "fought the devil" refers to his experience that "when we decide to be Christians or pastors, that the devil literally or metaphorically seeks us out and gives us challenges." For participants, Spiritual refers to the quest for the presence of God and the struggles that are part of that quest.

Table B23

Affinity: Spiritual

↑faith	Inspiring
Beauty and tranquility of this campus	Letting go, letting God
Blessed	Peaceful
Faith internalized in new ways	Prayer
Fought the devil	Spiritual
Grace	

Transformation

Participants wrote 25 cards that they clumped into a category named Formation (Table B24). Formation has to do with perceptions of one's vocational identity, self-awareness, growth and change. Formation has a range of possible values. It may involve struggle and dismantling of beliefs, and it may be reassuring and affirming. Participants also wrote 19 cards about Expanding Intellectual Horizons (Table B25). In discussion, they clarified the meaning of words and phrases such as "revelation," "connecting," and "larger world" as positive aspects of their seminary experience. These terms connote intellectual growth understood as something valuable. Participants wrote six cards for a

Table B24

Focus Group Category: Formation

Formational	Spiritual & emotional growth	Eye opening
Eye opening	Faith challenging	Self awareness
Increased self-knowledge	Formation of pastoral identity	How do I fit in?
Growth out of struggle	Self examination	Intriguing ideas
New knowledge	Affirming	Leadership in home church in different ways
Continuous growth	Wondering whether I belong	New
Changes in focus and vocational identity	Affirmed call	Real growth and change
Self-identity	Reassuring	Dismantling foundational beliefs
Growth		

Table B25

Focus Group Category: Expanding Intellectual Horizons

Expanding	Increased stamina/capacity to read, write, learn	Larger world
Practical	Challenge, ideas →grow	Creative
Ministry practicum	Opportunity	Expectations
favorite [course]		
Revelation [new knowledge]	Adventure	Inspiring
Mental exercise	Expanding possibilities	Instructional
Expansive	Made to feel smart	Inspired
	Connecting [ideas]	

Table B26

Focus Group Category: Journey

Motivating	Uncertainty
Road/journey	Wilderness trip
Time of preparation	Worry about what I'll do after seminary

category that the group eventually named Journey (Table B26). In discussion, the group clarified the meaning of Journey the recognition as that the seminary experience is only part of one's life journey. In some sense, it is a time apart pointing ahead to what comes next. Upon analysis, the researcher chose to combine the focus group categories called Journey, Expanding Intellectual Horizons, and Formation into the single affinity, *Transformation*. Transformation refers to the intellectual, personal, and vocational changes that happen to seminary students.

Second-Career Focus Group: Summary

Based on a focus group process of silent brainstorming, clumping together similar texts, and discussing their meanings, participants in the second-career focus group created 12 categories about their seminary experience. Following IQA standards for robust affinities, the researcher refined these rough affinities into a total of six. Table B27

summarizes the categories generated by the focus group and the resulting affinities and summarizes why the researcher consolidated categories.

Table B27

Consolidation of Focus Group Categories to Affinities, Second-Career Seminarian Focus Group

Focus Group Category	Affinity	Reason for Change
Community Anti-Community	Community	Both positive and negative dimensions of community lie along one continuum.
Effort Time Limits Physical	Effort	Time Limits and Physical are aspects of Effort.
Torn Between Two Worlds Support	Life Management	Both positive and negative dimensions lie along one continuum. "Between" suggests a relationship.
Feelings Spiritual	Feelings Spiritual	
Formation Expanding Intellectual Horizons Journey	Transformation	The three categories are aspects of Transformation.

Appendix C: Theoretical Coding Procedures

Participants told the researcher how various affinities exerted influence and were influenced by others, in line with procedures of interactive qualitative analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Appendix C describes these procedures.

Coding Individual Interviews

For two affinities in an IQA system, there are three possible relationships: 1 influences 2 (written 1→2), 2 influences 1 (written 2→1), or there is no relationship between them (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, pp.151-152). By rule, IQA does not allow an individual respondent to choose a reciprocal relationship (1 influences 2 and is simultaneously influenced by it) or to assert the tautology that an affinity influences itself. In the theoretical phase of the interview, the researcher asked, "In your experience, does 1 influence 2? Does 2 influence 1? Or is there no relationship?" In cases in which the informant seems unsure as to the direction of influence, the researcher asked how the influence flowed most of the time in that person's experience.

During the theoretical phase of the interview, the researcher asked the informant to state her opinion as to the relationship and to provide an example of the relationship in action. The researcher and interviewee worked through all pair-wise relationships between the 12 affinities on the interview protocol. Responses were marked on the affinity relationship table (ART), documenting the informant's understanding of how the affinities influenced one another. The data in the ART were transferred into another form, the affinity interrelationship diagram (IRD). Following IQA procedures (Northcutt &

McCoy, 2004), the IRD produces a preliminary estimate of how affinities are related to one another in a conceptual world, or mindmap, for an individual. IQA conceptualizes data as a closed system of relationships. In the system, there are relative *drivers* and *outcomes*. A driver is an affinity in a system that influences many other affinities. An outcome is an affinity that, while it may influence some other affinities, exerts influence on relatively few or none. Some affinities are situated in the middle of the system because they exert influence on some affinities but also have influence exerted on them by other affinities.

The next step in the analysis of an individual interview is to draw a system influence diagram (SID) and remove redundant links from it. The SID is a graphical relationship that conserves all of the information about inter-affinity relationships discovered in theoretical coding. The initial or cluttered SID displays arrows between affinities for every relationship of influence. The cluttered SID is saturated with links. While it faithfully describes the system, containing all the statements about the influence of one affinity upon another, this richness is in tension with the goal of explanatory power, which is the purpose of creating a system of affinities rather than simply producing a thematic analysis, or concluding accurately (but unhelpfully) that many affinities influence many other affinities in the system.

By following IQA rules for the removal of some of these links, the result is an uncluttered SID, which is "a way to reconcile the richness-parsimony dialectic" (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 176). In the uncluttered SID, multiple paths of influence between affinities are removed to create the topologically simplest relationship between the affinities. The logic of the uncluttered SID is that intermediate affinities are the

mechanisms through which a driver influences an outcome. Because there are rules for removing redundant links, and because the rules are not dependent on the content of any affinities, every IQA researcher produces the same uncluttered SID, given the same sets of relationships between the affinities.

Aggregating Theoretical Data

IQA posits that students at NCTS together create and share a socially constructed world. This section describes IQA procedures for aggregating the data from individual respondents into a composite system for first-career students, and a composite system for second-career students. The resulting *composite SID* looks identical to a SID produced with the data collected from one informant. However, IQA uses frequencies and decision-rules to build a model of a group's conceptual world. By counting the frequency of specific pair-wise relationships from a constituency (as reported by those interviewed) and employing a Pareto Protocol, the researcher builds ARTs and SIDs to describe the conceptual world of that constituency. The *group mindmap* graphically depicts the system of relationships of a typical representative of the constituency. The first step in creating the composite system is described below.

Combined Interview Coding

As described earlier in this appendix, the researcher interviewed individuals about the influences exerted by affinities on other affinities during the theoretical phase of the interview. Each individual interview produced an ART for that individual. By counting the frequency with which individual participants expressed their opinion about pair-wise relationships between affinities, the researcher then produced a theoretical code

frequency table. The IQA principle is that the relationship voiced by the majority of those interviewed expresses the systemic relationship (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 271-290). The researcher tallied all of the relationships from all of the individual theoretical interviews and then implemented the Pareto Protocol and power analysis described below.

Pareto Protocol and Power Analysis

The Pareto Protocol in IQA is based on the Pareto principle (Juran, 1954; Juran, 2001; Pareto principle, 2005), named for Italian economist Wilfredo Pareto. The principle states that "something like 20% of the variables in a system will account for 80% of the total variation in outcomes" (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p.157). In terms of frequency of interview responses, the Pareto principle suggests that most of the information in a conceptual system is captured in a subset of the pair-wise relationships. To implement the Pareto Protocol, the researcher sorted the results charted in the Theoretical Code Frequency Table in descending order. Microsoft Excel templates built by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) enabled the researcher to determine from the frequency of votes cast for a relationship (e.g., 1 → 4) what those votes meant in terms of the total number of votes cast and the total number of pair-wise relationships in the system. The total votes cast is a function of the number of theoretical interviews conducted.

In a system with a given number of affinities, there are always a set number of pair-wise combinations. In the 12-affinity system used in this study, there are 66 such relationships. Each relationship accounts for 1.52 percent of the total relationships. In a set of 20 interviews, the maximum possible number of votes cast is 1,320 (66 pair-wise relationships between affinities times 20 constituents). If 18 informants report that

Affinity 1 influences Affinity 4 and 1,100 total votes are cast, then that single pair-wise combination captures 1.6 percent of the available votes.The *MinMax criterion* in IQA states that a good system maximizes the variation within the system while minimizing the number of pair-wise relationships in the system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 160). Researchers seek to account for at least 80 percent of the variation. Use of IQA has demonstrated that using one-third of all possible pair-wise combinations may account for 80 percent of the variation, thus satisfying the MinMax criterion. Following IQA procedures, the researcher determined the sets of pair-wise relationships that met the MinMax criterion.

Building the Composite Systems

Using the relationships identified by the Pareto protocol, the researcher created a composite affinity interrelationship diagram (IRD) for each constituency. In some cases, it was unclear which pair-wise relationship was dominant in the minds of respondents. In building the composite system, the complexity of group experience is honored by including conflicting data. Following IQA rules (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the researcher created a composite SID that contained conflicting relationships. IQA procedures provided rules to remove redundant links to produce an uncluttered composite SID. The imposition of parsimony (following IQA rules for uncluttered systems) produces analytic power by revealing key relationships in the system.

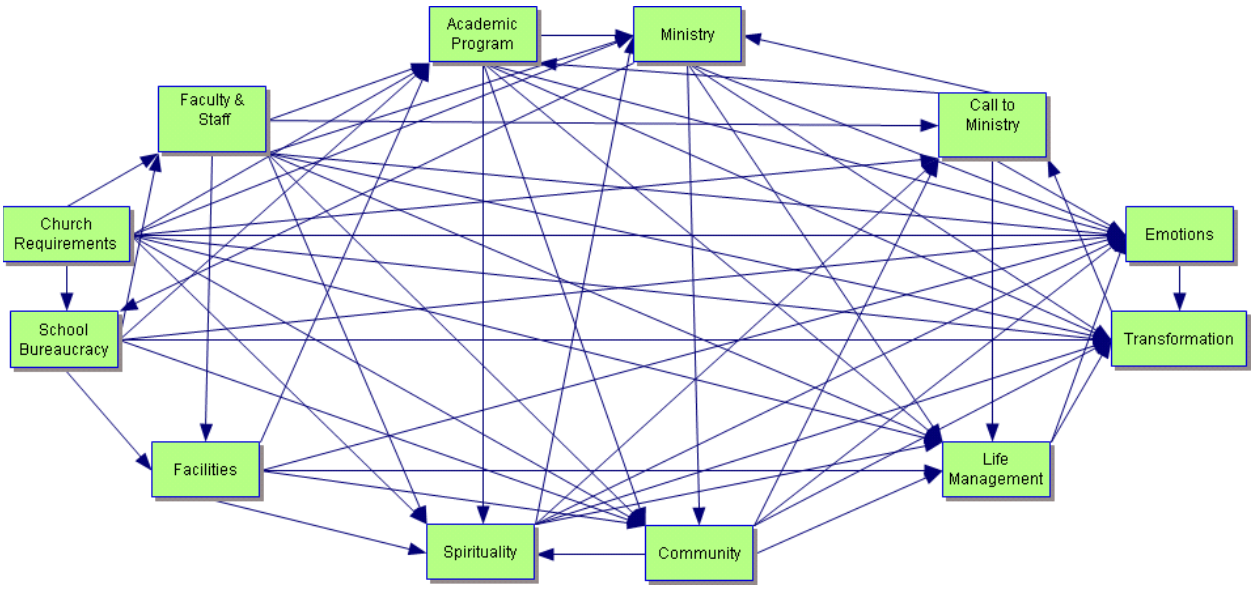

Figure C1

Cluttered System Influence Diagram, First-Career Seminarians

Because this study compared two constituencies, the researcher created composite SIDs for each constituency. Figure C1 depicts the composite cluttered SID for the first-career constituency. The links between elements (depicted by arrows) depict all influential relationships for elements in this system consistent with the MinMax criterion. For instance, the affinity Church Requirements influences many other affinities, including School Bureaucracy, Spirituality, Emotions, and Transformation. Figure C1 contains a wealth of information about relationships, but does little to reveal the overall pattern of relationships in the system. Figure C2 shows this pattern by implementing IQA rules for removing redundant links between elements.

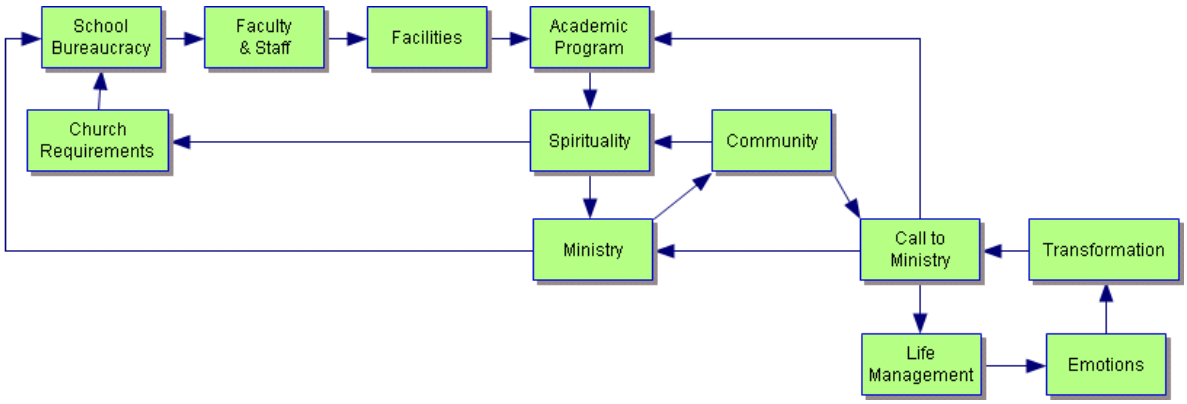

Figure C2

Uncluttered System Influence Diagram, First-Career Seminarians

Chapter four discusses figure C2 in detail. From a methodological point of view, the benefit of the uncluttered SID is that this simpler system shows the flow of influence from Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy to other affinities in the system.

Figure C3 depicts the composite cluttered SID for the second-career constituency. The links between elements (depicted by arrows) depict all influential relationships for elements in this system consistent with the MinMax criterion. For instance, the affinity Church Requirements influences many other affinities, including Spirituality, Emotions, and Transformation. The affinity Academic Program influences Spirituality and Community. Figure C3 contains a wealth of information about relationships but does little to reveal the overall pattern of relationships in the system.

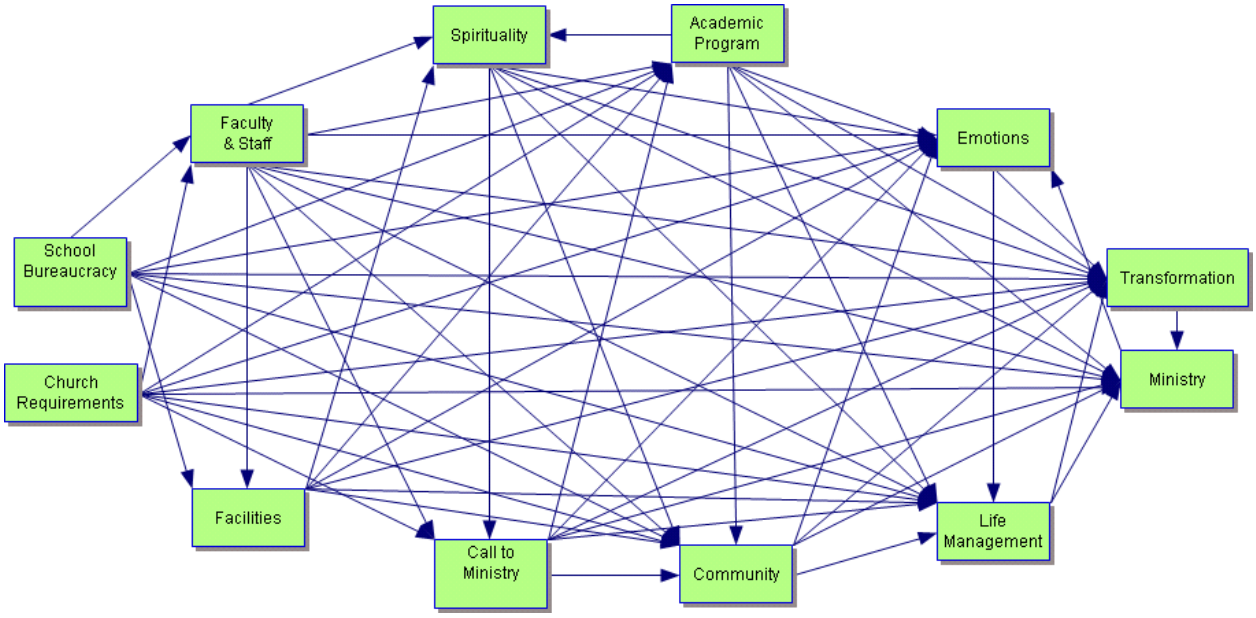

Figure C3

Cluttered System Influence Diagram, Second-Career Seminarians

Figure C4 shows this pattern by implementing IQA rules for removing redundant links between elements. Chapter four discusses figure C4 in detail. From a methodological point of view, the benefit of this uncluttered SID is that this simpler system shows the flow of influence from Church Requirements and School Bureaucracy to other affinities in the system, culminating in outcomes such as Transformation, Emotions, and Ministry.

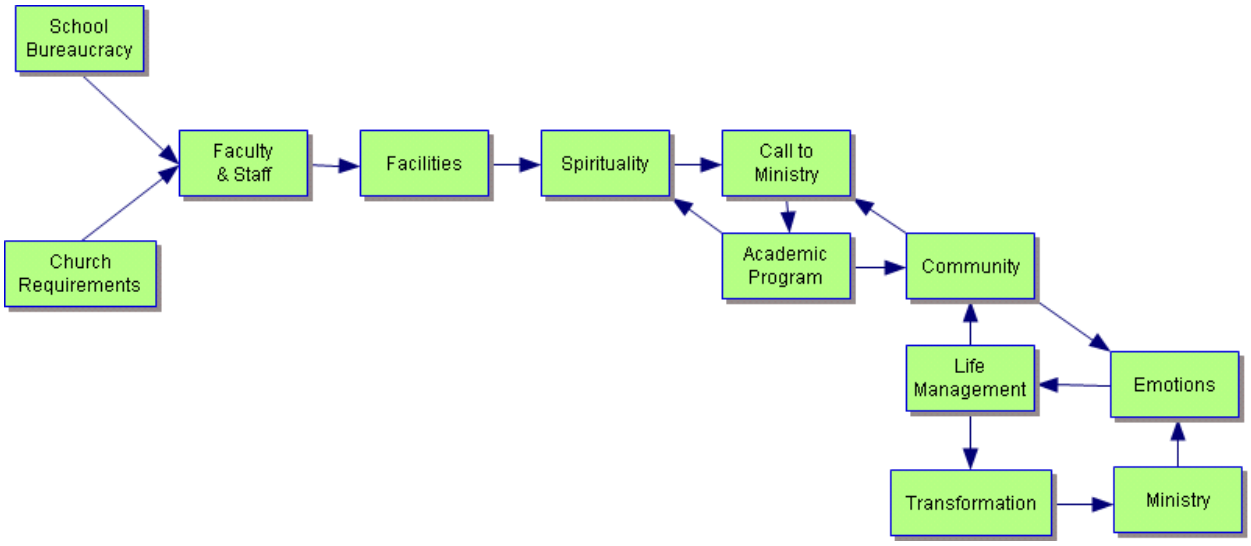

Figure C4

Uncluttered System Influence Diagram, Second-Career Seminarians

Appendix D: Timbre Analysis

The researcher determined the modal timbre for each affinity, based on the IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) concept of timbre as analogous to the range of values for a quantitative variable. Chapter four summarizes the results of the timbre analysis for the 12 affinities discovered in this study. Appendix D provides the details of ratings for each affinity, by constituency. The order of reporting affinities follows the rough order of affinities from driver to outcomes in the group mindmaps.

The researcher coded the timbre for all affinities except one on a simple continuum of positive, neutral, and negative. A rating of positive indicates that, for a given participant, their individual experience of the affinity was pleasant or useful. A rating of negative indicates that a participant's experience was unpleasant or not useful. A rating of neutral indicates that an individual's experience was neither positive nor negative.

Timbre Comparison: Church Requirements (Driver)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Church Requirements, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D1 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. For first-career students, the modal values of this affinity were positive and negative (bimodal). For second-career students, the modal values were neutral and negative (bimodal).

Table D1

Timbre Ratings, Church Requirements

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	3	1
Neutral	1	4
Negative	3	4
Total Number of Ratings	7	9
Mode	Positive; Negative	Neutral; Negative

Timbre Comparison: Faculty and Staff (Driver)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Faculty and Staff, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D2 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Faculty and Staff was positive for both constituencies.

Table D2

Timbre Ratings, Faculty and Staff

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	6	6
Neutral	1	1
Negative	0	1
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: School Bureaucracy (Driver)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity School Bureaucracy, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D3 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for this affinity was positive for both first- and second-career students.

Table D3

Timbre Ratings, School Bureaucracy

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	5	4
Neutral	0	1
Negative	2	2
Total Number of Ratings	7	7
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Facilities (Driver)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Facilities, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D4 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Facilities was neutral for both first- and second-career students. The rating frequency for first-career students, however, was virtually the same for each possible timbre value, suggesting that there was no dominant timbre for the affinity Facilities.

Table D4

Timbre Ratings, Facilities

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	2	2
Neutral	3	3
Negative	2	1
Total Number of Ratings	7	6
Mode	Neutral	Neutral

Timbre Comparison: Academic Program (Mid-System)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Academic Program, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D5 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for this affinity was positive for both first- and second-career students.

Table D5

Timbre Ratings, Academic Program

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	4	6
Neutral	1	1
Negative	2	2
Total Number of Ratings	7	9
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Community (Mid-System)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Community, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D6 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Community was positive for both constituencies.

Table D6

Timbre Ratings, Community

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	4	5
Neutral	1	1
Negative	2	2
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Spirituality (Mid-System)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Spirituality, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D7 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for this affinity was positive for second-career students. The modal values for first-career students were positive and neutral (bimodal).

Table D7

Timbre Ratings, Spirituality

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	3	5
Neutral	3	3
Negative	1	0
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive; Neutral	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Call to Ministry (Mid-System)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Call to Ministry, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D8 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Call to Ministry was positive for both first- and second-career students. However, the number of ratings that were neutral and negative in the second-career constituency equaled the number of positive ratings.

Table D8

Timbre Ratings, Call to Ministry

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	6	4
Neutral	1	3
Negative	0	1
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Ministry (Mid-System)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Ministry, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D9 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Ministry was positive for both constituencies.

Table D9

Timbre Ratings, Ministry

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	6	6
Neutral	1	1
Negative	0	1
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Life Management (Outcome)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Life Management, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D10 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. For first-career students, the modal value for timbre for this affinity was positive and neutral (bimodal). For second-career students, the modal value was negative.

Table D10

Timbre Ratings, Life Management

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	3	2
Neutral	3	2
Negative	1	4
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive; Neutral	Negative

Timbre Comparison: Transformation (Outcome)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Transformation, three ratings were possible: positive, neutral, and negative. Table D11 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Transformation was positive for both constituencies.

Table D11

Timbre Ratings, Transformation

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	6	6
Neutral	0	2
Negative	1	0
Total Number of Ratings	7	8
Mode	Positive	Positive

Timbre Comparison: Emotions (Outcome)

The researcher rated each interview transcript independently for timbre. For the affinity Emotions, four ratings were possible: positive, neutral, negative, and *volatile* (i.e., highly variable). The rating volatile was included because analysis of the transcripts for this affinity showed that participants commonly reported that their emotional state fluctuated depending on the specific times in the academic calendar. The relevant texts

are reported in chapter four under the affinity Emotions, sub-theme Roller Coaster of Emotions. Table D12 shows the tabulated results for each constituency. The modal value for timbre for Emotions was volatile for first-career students, and negative for second-career students.

Table D12

Timbre Ratings, Emotions

Rating	First-Career	Second-Career
Positive	1	2
Neutral	1	0
Negative	0	4
Volatile	5	1
Total Number of Ratings	7	7
Mode	Volatile	Negative

Table D13

Modal Affinity Timbre Value, By Constituency

Affinity	First-career	Second-career
Church Requirements*	Positive; Negative	Neutral; Negative
School Bureaucracy	Positive	Positive
Faculty and Staff	Positive	Positive
Facilities	Neutral	Neutral
Academic Program	Positive	Positive
Spirituality*	Positive; Neutral	Positive
Community	Positive	Positive
Ministry	Positive	Positive
Call to Ministry	Positive	Positive
Life Management*	Positive; Neutral	Negative
Emotions*	Volatile	Negative
Transformation	Positive	Positive

*Affinities for which modes differ between the two constituencies.

Summary

This section summarizes Appendix D. The modes differ between constituencies for the affinities Church Requirements, Spirituality, Life Management, and Emotions. In

the case of all other affinities, there is agreement between constituencies on the modal timbre. Table D13 recapitulates the timbre comparisons of this appendix by constituency. Chapter five of the study refines and interprets the results of the timbre comparisons detailed here.

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